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The Woodhouse Correspondence

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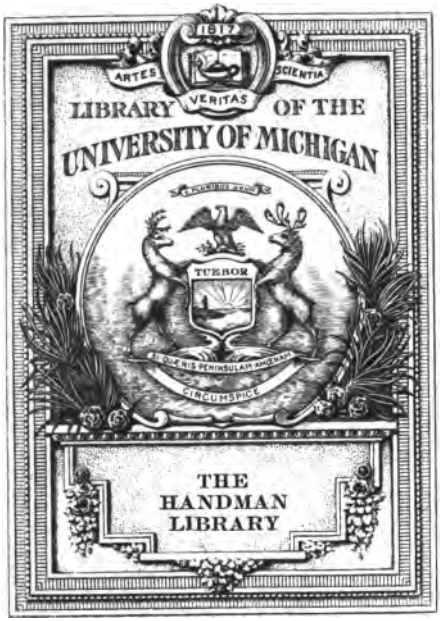

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The Woodhouse Correspondence

By George William Erskine Russell *and* Edith Sichel

"As for Fitz-Heron, he is so very selfish, he always wants his letters answered."

LORD BEACONSFIELD, *Sybil.*

New York
Dodd, Mead and Company
MCMIV

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Published February, 1904

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TO

THE ÆSTHETIC

THE MAGNETIC

AND THE SPLENETIC

THESE STUDIES IN

IDIOSYNCRASY

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

LAMMAS DAY

1903

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FOREWORD

IN order to a clear apprehension of the ensuing Correspondence, it may be well to premise that Mr. Algernon Wentworth-Woodhouse is neither related to the Wentworths of Rockingham, nor (in spite of persistent confusions between the two families) to the Woodhouses of Hartfield.

For Mr. Woodhouse's paternal descent the curious reader is referred to Burke's "Landed Gentry," vol. II. His mother was Lady Laura Fitzwigan, daughter of the 3d Earl of Wiganthorpe. He was educated at Balliol College, Oxford, where he obtained a Third Class in the Final Classical School, and formed the only friendship of his life. (The friend's name was William Henry Thompson, and, after taking his degree, he entered the Civil Service.)

Algernon Woodhouse was born the second son; but,

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owing to his eldest brother's death (*v.p.*), he succeeded to the family estates in Norfolk and Yorkshire.

His younger brother, George, took Holy Orders, married, and died early, leaving a family. Of the sisters, two remained unmarried, while the third, who married Mr. Andrew Murray (see Burke's "Peerage," *Atholl*, Duke of; Colls:) was left a widow, with one son, Francis Woodhouse Murray, and did not long survive her husband.

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CHAPTER I

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THE WOODHOUSE CORRESPONDENCE

CHAPTER I

To *ALGERNON WENTWORTH-WOODHOUSE, Esq.*,
The Hall, Feversham-sur-Strand.

49B ANHALT-DESSAU GARDENS, CAMPDEN HILL,
My Birthday.

MY DEAR GODFATHER,—When you came to see us a year ago, you said that if ever I was in difficulties I might write to you. You may not recall the fact, for your existence is a full one. But with me it is far otherwise. I had not seen you since I was a little girl, and till I met you I did not know what true Sympathy was.

And now, on my twenty-fourth birthday, the moment you foresaw has arrived. A Crisis in my life has come, and I have decided to leave home and live

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by myself. My home circle stifles me; my Spirit demands solitude, and, if I am to develop myself, I must have it. It is on this point that I need your advice. I can turn to no one else. You are my father's oldest friend and, besides that, you have long known all the Thompsons, though, with the exception of myself, there is really very little to know. I cannot help realising this, for I am the only Thompson who has the Artistic Temperament. Poor papa, as you are aware, still insists on going daily to his Government office and red tape still satisfies him. Far be it from me to blame him—it is the Groove to which he has grown accustomed. My mother, as you will also remember, leads the life of a mere invalid, a slave to rheumatism. For this, too, I can make allowances. It needs a strong soul to dominate the body, and Will-power is uncommon in her generation. The rest of my family, four brothers and two younger sisters, are not at all gifted, and they neither understand me nor appreciate my aims. So I am very, very lonely. I do not in the least know how I came by my artistic

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temperament. I only know that it is there, that I suffer from all its symptoms. I am a prey to nervous depression; I get exhausted directly I am opposed; I cannot take my meals with other people; and I am writing a Realistic Novel which centres round the Education Bill. It is for this that I exist, and to this that I consecrate my Powers. Yet my relations will not show me any sympathy, or make it possible for me to live at home.

It stands to reason that to develop myself I must have *room;* that if I am to create there must be Silence in my Soul and plenty of books at hand. I am conscious that I have many faults, but I think I may safely affirm that selfishness is not one of them. Yet my family, from pure prejudice, refuse me the simplest request; they will not even allow me the use of the drawing-room between 10 and 3, or, again, between 8.30 and 11 p. m., when I find my brain moves the most quickly. And yet there is no reason against it. My mother has quite a large bedroom; my father has made a study of his dressing-room, and there is

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plenty of space for my youngest brother to prepare his lessons there. Surely the five others need not make difficulties about sitting in the dining-room, where the laying of meals does not take more than twenty minutes. It is true that the piano is in the drawing-room, but the one of my sisters who plays will never do anything for Art—anything, I mean, that justifies the sacrifice of my Work. As for her singing-class for shop-girls, which she used to have once a week, we all have to learn that charity begins at home.

My second motive in leaving home—for I have a second motive—is *to see Life*. Much can be done, I am sure, by reading—and I *have* read, deeply, for my Novel. I have gone through Zola and a good deal of Kant and three or four Bluebooks on Secondary Education. But reading is not all. My book is a subversive book, and, as this is so, I must know *what* I am subverting. I must also study Passion. And how can these ends be obtained except by watching Life—the life of Society by day, the life of music-halls and of public-houses by night? But my poor father ob-

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jects to my researches, and so—since I fight for Truth —it seems best to quit his house. I think of taking a small flat and of becoming a typewriter for my livelihood. Of course, to begin with, this will not leave me any time for my Novel, *but then I shall be seeing Life* at the Polytechnic classes.

Will you most kindly give me your *candid* opinion on the course I should pursue? Only please do not try to persuade me to go on living at home. You, who are so wise, will perhaps be able to explain why one's relations are always much more irritating than anybody else, and why their temper is allowed to ruin domestic happiness. Pray forgive me for this long, but I hope not uninteresting, letter. I shall be hungry for your answer.—Yours in all sincerity,

ELAINE THOMPSON.

My Novel is to be called "The Woof-Warp." I should like to consult you as to whether Chapter L. is too strong to be left in.

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THE HALL, FEVERSHAM-SUR-STRAND,
August 28th, 1902.

DEAR MISS ELAINE,—Your letter touches and gratifies me. Would that I could reply to it more adequately. Let me say at the outset that I fully recognise your right to demand any assistance which it is in my power to give. Your father and I were close friends at Balliol. I recall with much pleasure the walks which we used to take over Shotover and by the Upper River, discussing The Unconditioned. The late Master of Balliol—a man, in my judgment, greatly overrated (his name was Jowett; you may have heard your father mention it)—went so far as to say that if we had talked less about The Unconditioned and read more Thucydides we might have done better in the schools (or final examination). This is possibly the case, for neither of us, I think I may say, was deficient in intelligence. But the memory of that com-

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munion of mind with mind is still precious to me; and I welcomed it as the sign of a reciprocal sentiment on your father's part when he asked me to be your godfather. With respect to the nature and claims of the sponsorial office, I take no extreme or mediæval view; but I am free to confess that I have never regarded its obligations as adequately discharged by the conventional gift of a silver mug, or a case of forks and spoons. Such tokens of goodwill always appear to me to jar painfully on solemn associations, and you will have observed that, in your case, I testified my interest by what I thought a more suitable medium—a copy of "Guesses at Truth," a book to which I owe much in the way of moral and intellectual stimulus.

The experience of life has taught me that, in counselling a friend, simplicity, directness, and the avoidance of ambiguity are points greatly to be cultivated. I therefore say, in the very forefront of my reply, that, although I perfectly understand your wish to leave home, it is quite impossible for me to receive you here. Had my dear wife been spared, things

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might have worn a different complexion; but since her death I have largely reduced my establishment, and have, indeed, shut up the greater part of the house. I do not think you have ever been here, so I may as well explain that all the principal apartments face due north, and I fear that the bronchial asthma and chronic congestion of the lung which so embittered my loved one's last days may have been due to the fact that the sun could never visit the rooms in which she lived. Since her death I have avoided scenes so fraught with painful associations, and live exclusively in my private rooms in the south wing, which, being very warm and sunny, make it possible for me to remain (though not without difficulty) at Feversham during the winter months. Under these circumstances you will see that it would be impossible for me to invite you here, and I have the less hesitation in intimating the impossibility because, within the last week, I have been obliged to decline the offer of my sisters (who are getting on in life, and who reside habitually at Torquay) to spend

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the months of September and October in their old home.

That your excellent father, with whom I once wandered in more transcendental fields, should find adequate employment and interest in the work of a public office is a gratifying instance of that beneficent law of nature—adaptation to environment. It is not unlikely that, had circumstances compelled me to work for my subsistence, a similar fate would have been mine. But an income derived from land (and my father's judicious investments in railway stock) have left me free for that life of tranquil observation and reflection to which, even from early youth, I always aspired.

The due limits of space forbid me to follow you through your very graphic account of your domestic arrangements, the size and number of your rooms, and the routine of the household. Being myself free from the cares of a family (and now, alas! a widower), I have always been accustomed, both here and in Portland Place, to a house considerably larger than I re-

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quire; and, indeed, I have found that the unshared command of good-sized, quiet, and well-lighted rooms has been an indispensable condition of any intellectual effort.

But, waving all these merely domestic and personal considerations, we are reduced to the bare proposition that you wish to leave home, and that for two purposes: (1) that you may write your novel without interruption, and (2) that you may, to use your own phrase, "see life." On the preliminary questions whether you are qualified to write a novel, and whether, if you write it, you are more likely to make or to lose money by it, as you do not ask me, I forbear to express an opinion. I understand that you are actually engaged on the novel, and there can be no doubt that with the examples of Miss Austen, Miss Braddon, Miss Broughton, Mrs. Ward, and Miss Fowler before you, you do not lack the justification of precedent. The pecuniary aspects of the case (as you no doubt very properly feel) can be most suitably discussed with your father. Should you be reduced to the necessity,

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always salubrious but sometimes difficult, of making your own living, various expedients demand consideration.

1. In the first place, there is the course which you yourself suggest, of becoming a professional typewriter; and I will say at once that, if only you can make it pay for your lodging, board, clothing, and other necessities, no objection can be entertained to it on any social or conventional score. (My dear wife learnt typewriting in her later years, in order to facilitate my correspondence, and Sir William Jenner always believed that the exertion shortened her life.)

2. Another expedient would be to ask the publishers of your novel to pay you a certain sum quarterly on account till the work is finished. As I do not know the publishers, or the nature and probable success of your book, I cannot recommend this course with any confidence.

3. A young lady with whose family I was acquainted, went as Companion (without salary) to two ladies, not young, but very highly connected, who

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lived in a flat in Victoria Street. One of them was blind; the other deaf. My young friend's duty was to read aloud to them, and the only drawback to her happiness was that, if she read loud enough for the deaf lady, the blind one rebuked her for screaming; and that, if she dropped her voice, the deaf lady accused her of mumbling.

4. I group together under one head such expedients as assisting in the millinery business, a photographic studio, or a teashop in Bond Street. I am told that some of these posts are very fairly paid; and, when once you have broken the trammels of a conventional gentility, I do not apprehend that you would have much difficulty in adapting yourself to your new surroundings. Whether such employments would leave you adequate time for your literary work is a question which you must judge for yourself. But they would certainly give you excellent opportunities for "seeing life."

So much, then, in the way of practical counsel. To the larger and more abstract question, "why one's re-

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lations are irritating," I must reply in a later letter.—Believe me, with very great truth, faithfully yours,

ALGERNON WENTWORTH-WOODHOUSE.

P.S.—When I have had the advantage of seeing "The Woof-Warp," I shall be prepared to give a judgment on Chapter L. But I must warn you that in these matters I am old-fashioned.—A. W.-W.

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CHAPTER II

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CHAPTER II

ANHALT-DESSAU GARDENS, CAMPDEN HILL,
September 1st.

MY DEAR GODFATHER,—Your letter has made a great Peace in my Soul. I cannot thank you enough for the penetrating delicacy with which you have understood me. I see with what insight—may I say genius?—you have unravelled the tangled skein of my circumstances and motives, and with what indulgence you have measured the limitations of my family. And I feel sure now that you will stand by me in the struggle that is to come with them. May I venture, in my gratitude, to send you this little sonnet, which is addressed to you, and expresses my feelings better than any prose?—

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THE WOODHOUSE CORRESPONDENCE

TO MY GODFATHER, A. W.-W.

IN THANKS FOR . . .

Broken am I upon the Wheel of Life,
A Cistern of strange Forces—full of sap—
But thou hast acted as my Water-tap,
Cooling my Soul, and all its seething strife.
Sweet are the drippings of thy sympathy,
Like a great shadow in a weary land;
For when from out the Wilderness I cry,
Thou, thou alone, hast ears to understand.
So shall I conquer, holding by thy hand,
Since I am dowered with Love, and Fear, and Hate.
It is the Weak who sink; the Strong command,
For Man is Man and master of his fate,
And we two—little waves upon the Strand—
Will foam and break upon the Ultimate.

Do you care for Wordsworth, I wonder? If not, you may not like the line about the Water-tap. But I confess that I adore Wordsworth's simplicity. I have always formed myself half on Wordsworth and half on Shelley; but, after all, however small one may

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be beside the great, one is in the end purely and simply Oneself.

And this brings me to my Novel. The kind wish to read it which you express has encouraged me (I had been deeply, nervously depressed about Chapter L.), and I am now hurrying to complete Book III. of Vol. I., so that I may send you the first part of the MS. I have not offered it to any publisher yet. It is my first-fruits, and even if I could receive some portion of the pecuniary remuneration beforehand, I should refuse, for I fear that it would check the flow of my ideas. No first work of art with real strength in it has ever succeeded financially, and I shall not mind sending it about from one publisher to another. For I shall remember the Brontës and keep a high heart. As to the professions you so kindly propose to me, they are, unfortunately, shut to me for the following reasons. I could not possibly assist in any millinery business, since, belonging as I do, to the Selborne Society, I could have nothing to do with the birds and feathers considered essential in

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trimming hats; besides which, I am willing to own that the needle is not my strongest point. And a tea-shop is equally, I fear, against my principles which wage war against the luxury of the few. These shops are the Nests of Capitalists, and I make it a rule myself never to enter any place of refreshment except aërated bread shops. In these I often take tea and at the same time study the patient, ground-down Life that seeks shelter there. As to being a "companion," I know *you* will understand me if I say that I should hold this to be a real waste of my Powers. I should not object, it is true, to be reader or secretary to a man of letters, and if you should hear of such a one I would certainly consider it; but otherwise I should prefer poverty and freedom. I could never ask my father for any help and, except for the dress-allowance which I get from my mother, I shall not accept money from my home. I can live on little, and am very fond of Bovril and buns.

But the help that I really look for is spiritual—the help to be given by the letter you have promised on

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the difficulties of family life. I feel sure it will throw a rich light upon the subtle effects of temper on happiness, and I look forward with confident hope to this harvest of your long experience.—Yours deeply and gratefully,

ELAINE THOMPSON.

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THE HALL, FEVERSHAM-SUR-STRAND,
September 3d, 1902.

DEAR MISS ELAINE,—With respect to the sonnet which you are good enough to enclose, I am grateful for the kindly sentiment which it expresses, but I should be wanting in candour if I were to say that the execution seems to me equally meritorious. The metre of the Sonnet (even when handled by masters of the craft) seems to me unsatisfactory, and, in the hands of amateurs, it is apt to be even deplorable. This frank confession of my personal opinion will, in some measure, answer your question about Wordsworth. I hope I adequately recognise his high moral tone; and, for my own part, I have always regarded him as a true lover of nature; but, in the matter of poetical expression, I belong rather to that school of which Alexander Pope is the supreme exemplar. And here, as you are embarking on a literary career, I may perhaps (as one who has long dabbled in authorship) venture to tell

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you that you will find Pope's "Essay on Man" a veritable treasure-house of apt and pungent quotation. But I must eschew digression, and pass on to a point of more practical interest. You speak of my "kind wish to read your novel." Here, I fear, the pardonable enthusiasm of early authorship has carried you a little beyond the record. I have no copy of my former letter. My dear wife used to spend a good deal of her time in copying my letters into large volumes of MS., which were bound at the end of the year, and filed in the library. But the asthmatic wheezing to which she was habitually subject was so much increased by the habit of perpetually poring over a desk as to become positively distressing to all around her, and (though I need hardly say that on other accounts I deeply deplored her loss) the cessation of this painful sound was an actual relief to my nerves; and of late years my letters have remained uncopied. I am therefore not in a position to state with precision the terms which I employed in my former letter, but, so far as I can recall them, they did not amount—cer-

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tainly they were not intended to amount—to more than this, that, when your novel was *completed*, I should be willing (in compliance with your expressed desire) to examine—I will not say the ethical propriety, but rather the *convenable*-ness—of a particular chapter, with respect to which you yourself seem to be in considerable doubt. Pending the completion of your novel, the pecuniary problem stated in your former letter remains unsolved; and, as you brush aside (with little or no ceremony) the various attempts at a solution which I propounded, I will leave all questions of that nature to those whom they more immediately concern, and will redeem my promise to offer a few suggestions about the difficulties of Family Life.

In handling this perennially interesting but delicate theme, I desire to proceed with a stringency which my lamented friend Matthew Arnold would have called *wissenschaftlich*. He habitually used the word in preference to "scientific," lest, as he playfully remarked, his readers should imagine that he had any interest in the blue lights and bad smells of a chemical lecture.

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Sweeping away, then, all adventitious and accessory elements of unpleasantness, I say that the essential principle—the pith and substance—of the Disagreeableness of Relations consists in their intimate knowledge of one's character and habits. Even in natures of the highest type there are limitations and imperfections, little weaknesses, trifling foibles, of which one is perhaps even painfully conscious, and which a not unworthy self-respect prompts one to conceal, so far as may be, from the outer world. From all such dim recesses of the human heart the curtain is ruthlessly torn away by the rough hand of Relationship. Let me illustrate this from the records of my life. Owing to physical delicacy, engendered by chronic whooping-cough with its resulting emphysema, I was not sent to a Public School, but was retained till adolescence under the refining influences of female instruction, and I shrank with a natural repugnance from the too-frequent brutality and roughness of boy-life and boy-amusements. Cricket I honestly contemned as unworthy of a thinking adolescent; and hunting I

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roundly denounced as a concession to the instincts of savagery, which eighteen centuries of civilisation had been powerless to eradicate. My eldest brother, coming home from Eton for the holidays, was wont to declare, with all the ὕβρις of healthy boyhood, that I was a young muff, who blubbed if I got my knuckles hurt, and who jawed against hunting because I funked my pony. Waving the characteristic crudeness of phrase, I ask myself, "Was there an element of truth in all this?" and I am constrained to allow that there was. Yet no one except my eldest brother perceived it; or, perceiving it, thought it tactful to notice it. Poor fellow! he broke his neck in a regimental steeplechase, and Jacob, if I may express myself in figurative terms, acquired Esau's inheritance. It were opposed to the instincts of natural piety to bear hard upon the infirmities of the long-deceased; but these things rankle; and my brother's example illustrates one phase of the Disagreeableness of Relations. Others recur to the memory in quick succession.

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At Oxford I passed for a while under the influence of the Movement (not, in my later judgment, a healthy one) which is associated with the names of Keble and Pusey; and I purchased a Devotional Manual by an ascetic writer called Tartar, which contained a Form of Self-examination. A young lady of your delicacy will, I feel assured, recognise that my sisters overstepped the bounds of the pleasantry permitted in family life, when, finding this book on my table, they made pencil answers to several of the most searching questions—thus: "Have I been greedy at meals?" *Yes—very often.* "Do I always speak the truth?" *Hardly ever.* "Have I lost my temper?" *Do I ever keep it?* "Am I liberal in almsgiving?" *No; I am a horrid screw.*

Much water has flowed under the bridge since those notes were written; and Mr. Tartar's Manual has long been laid aside. But water cannot drown the unpleasant memories of early life; and, when my sisters propose to pay their annual visit here, I am haunted by an unpleasant suspicion that they keep watchful eyes

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on a certain nicety in the matter of eating and drinking which lifelong dyspepsia has made a second nature to me; and comment harshly, though inaudibly, on the severe retrenchment which a diminished rent-roll has rendered necessary.

But, after all, a certain amount of "imperfect sympathy" (I think the phrase is one of Charles Lamb's, the celebrated Essayist) between brothers and sisters is part of the common experience of life; and, alas! for our frail humanity, it is even more than usually perceptible in cases where only an exiguous provision is made for the younger members of the family. In such cases it is generally found that propinquity is an incentive to strife, and that peace is best secured by distance. A different *ratio*, or principle, should, as I conceive, characterize the relation of husband and wife; and (though this is a subject on which I do not enter without reluctance) I will go so far as to say that, at first, I found my dear wife a little inclined to behave as if she were one of my relations. Thus, on her first arrival at Feversham, she did not scruple to

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say that the scenery was monotonous, that a park without deer was nothing more than a meadow, and that the Hall resembled three houses in Portland Place joined by two crooked passages. It immediately became my duty to point out that the Woodhouses had been settled on these lands ever since the Reformation, having risen into greatness on the ruins of the Benedictines; and that there was a certain indefinable *cachet* about the place and its surroundings which an education in Manchester (where my father-in-law accumulated wealth) had scarcely prepared her to appreciate. Her repartee, to the effect that the Woodhouses, having had such a good start, must be rather a poor lot to have risen to no greater eminence in three centuries, demanded in return a rebuke which, on the principle of letting bygones be bygones, I now decline to revive. It is but bare justice to my dear one's memory to say that unpleasant utterances of this type were soon discontinued, and that the salutary labours of a very full life (for my broken health required incessant attention) effectively curbed the un-

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due vivacity of early married days. But the old wound long retains its tenderness. Painful allusions are not easily forgotten; and, till the end, I never felt quite safe when conversation took a personal turn. I have lingered, perhaps, too long on a theme fraught with melancholy interest. As one of our poets says, "We look before and after"; and something of my own experience seems to be reproduced, dear Miss Elaine, in yours. I perceive that you have already begun to realise—though, perhaps, you scarcely know how to formulate—this illuminating truth: "As a brutal realism is the Destruction of Art, so is a ruthless truthfulness the Curse of the Family."—Your friend and well-wisher,

ALGERNON WENTWORTH-WOODHOUSE.

P.S.—If my memory does not deceive me, you were christened Ellen.

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CHAPTER III

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CHAPTER III

Telegrams: RHYS LLANYMWS.
PLAS CWMEFN, CARDIFF,
September 8th.

DEAR ALGERNON,—It is long since I have sent you a letter, and now I am writing because I very much want your advice. You are the only person I can appeal to—since not only are you a man, but also a man of the world. My position as a widow makes intimate intercourse with most men a difficult matter. Not that dear George was ever of much help in that way, but then he was a younger son and a clergyman, and usefulness was therefore not in his line. It is you, his elder brother, the head of the family, to whom I look for counsel.

The gist of the matter is this: I have resolved to give the girls a season in London. Dora has been out

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for a year—you know what that means at Cwmefn—and Lilian has just turned eighteen. Dora has good looks and an elegant figure; Lilian is decidedly plain, but has a fine contralto voice; and I have this damp little house and a bare seven hundred a year. Their only chance is to marry, and they can only marry suitably in London. Their father's daughters, not to speak of mine (and the Quintilians of Quintilian are hardly nobodies), could not possibly find their match in these parts; for, after all, both you and I have good Norman blood in our veins. But the question is, *How is it to be done?* Of course, I shall let this house, but the rent will be needed for Tom's schooling.

In these matters it is best to be plain, so I will just enumerate the questions I want you to answer. To begin with: What are the readiest means to make a good show on next to no income? Where can we find cheap apartments with a good address—something that might pass as a flat? Does South Belgravia count, or does everyone know that it means Pimlico? And, as we are on finance, how long do you think

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the Stores—say Harrod's Stores—will wait to be paid?

Now, as to Society. Is a winter season any good? My own feeling is that we had better fly high, and go in for the regular summer campaign. I know nobody in London except my dentist; George's former curate —now married—and one old lady who respected my father. How is one to set about knowing the right sort of people—the families of eligible men—without showing that one knows no one? And how is one to get men to the house when the house is let in lodgings? or should one belong to a Club and never reveal one's address? Also, what are the things to go to? Is Henley, for instance, *de rigueur*, or Ascot, or the Opera? And what other ways are there of advertising oneself? I hear that self-advertisement has become a fine art, that everything, short of sandwich-men (they should always be women), can be used in that direction, but I should like your authority as to the best way to set about it. And then, what of diamonds? You know that I had the misfortune to lose my jewel-case, con-

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taining my wedding pendant and also the horseshoe, in small rubies and diamond chips, given me by your father on my marriage. Should I hire some diamonds (I hear that Lady G. did so), and, in this case, does one get them by the week, or is a reduction made if one takes them by the month?

You will greatly assist me if you will reply to these questions by return. You see that I have not minced matters, but mince is never very nourishing. If you live in Rome, you must do as the Romans do, and it is better, if possible, to do it before you get there. That has always been my motto, and I shall try to act on it now. As long as I was a clergyman's wife it was not fitting that I should be worldly—and there was no occasion for me to be so; but the same rule does not apply to a clergyman's widow, and I see little difference between worldliness and what is called maternal sentiment. I need not remind you that it is George's daughters—your own nieces—I ask your help for (Lilian, indeed, is in all ways a thorough Woodhouse), and I am sure, if you give it, you will have your re-

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ward. I will only add that I hope your health is better than when I last heard from you, and that the baths did you good.—Believe me, your affectionate sister-in-law,

MAUDE QUINTILIAN WOODHOUSE.

P.S.—Pray do not mention the fact of our coming to London, if you should be writing to your *protégés*, the Thompsons. They ought to have been mentioned in my list of the people I know in town. But you will easily understand that I wish to avoid them. Have you heard that that dreadful eldest girl, Elaine (who always used to be Ellen), the one with the worst complexion, is going to set up as a nurse, or a typewriter, or something? Happily, though, in London, it is easier to lose the acquaintance you don't want than to find the ones that you do.

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THE HALL, FEVERSHAM-SUR-STRAND,
September 10th, 1902.

DEAR MAUDE,—It is, as you justly observe, "sometime" since I received a letter from you. You might strengthen the statement, and say "some considerable time," or even "a long time," and yet not incur the reproach of exaggeration. I think you must be aware that, since my dear one left me, my life in this large and rather dreary house has little in the way of brightness or (except so far as intellectual resources are concerned) of interest. To receive, from time to time, some account of Intermediate Education in Wales, or the present aspect of the Tithe Question, would agreeably vary the monotony of existence, and would recall me in fancy to once familiar fields. It was, etc. It was, I confess, with some feeling of disappointment that, on opening your letter, I found it wholly engrossed with personal and—if I may say so—rather trivial topics.

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You appeal to me as "a man of the world"—a title bearing various senses, to some of which I lay no claim —and as the eldest living brother of your late husband; and you request my advice in matters touching the well-being of your family. I believe that an indifference to the claims of family affection is not a fault with which I could be justly charged; but I feel it due to myself to say that a request for advice comes rather oddly from you to me. I am unwilling to rekindle the embers of past controversy, but I cannot forget that your husband, my junior by several years, systematically declined to be guided by my advice. He persisted in adopting a clerical career (for which I held him to be eminently unfitted), and rejected, almost with discourtesy, an excellent opening in business at Shanghai, which, at some inconvenience to myself, I had procured for him. No sooner was he ordained than, with the most culpable imprudence, he became engaged to you; and it will not offend you if I say—for you have always known it—that I considered you an extremely unsuitable wife for a country clergy-

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man. How this systematic disregard of my judgment resulted, I almost hesitate to remind you. Indeed, you need no reminder more forcible than your present circumstances. While still a comparatively young woman, you find yourself a widow, practically penniless, and burdened with the maintenance of a large and expensive family. Had poor George (at whose memory a brother should be the last to throw stones) accepted the appointment at Shanghai, he would, as likely as not, be alive now and in receipt of a decent income. In any case, the early and imprudent marriage, which has led to so many disasters, would, in all probability, have been avoided.

But I turn (I confess with some relief) from these distressing retrospects, and from the always idle study of the might-have-been to the present and the actual.

You say that you have "resolved" on giving your girls a season in London. Had you asked me in advance what I thought of this project, I should have used a brother's frankness in telling you that I thought

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it even culpably absurd. As, however, you speak of it as already resolved on, I am bound to assume that you have some pecuniary resources of which I have no cognisance; and your request for my advice amounts only to a request for hints as to the methods by which these resources, greater or smaller (I fear smaller), can be applied with the best result.

As to what you say about the good looks of one daughter and the musical gifts of the other, you will not think me harsh or unsympathetic if I brush it aside as the natural utterance of a mother's partiality. I have often observed that girls considered pretty in the home circle have made no impression in Society; and, when a girl is confessedly and undeniably plain, accomplishments of a very high order are requisite to outweigh the defect. Accomplishments are, I should fear, quite out of your reach at Plâs Cwmefn; and an uncultivated contralto cannot be reckoned as a social asset.

Your allusion to your own family seems to me, if I may say so, entirely beside the mark. Unless I am

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greatly misinformed, the agricultural depression which has destroyed so many good families during the last twenty years has borne with peculiar severity on your brother's property. I think it is many years since he had a house in London (even for the season), and, in a world where people are busy and memories short, I fear you will not find Quintilian a name to conjure with. I am free to confess that opportunities of marriage suited to your girls' position and education seem more likely to occur at or near Cardiff than in London. The moneyed men of that thriving town might be attracted by the prospect of an alliance with the County; and a girl with wholesome rural tastes has often been very happy as wife to a gentleman farmer. These consolations, however, must be dismissed if, as I understand, you have "resolved" to come to London. I may regard the project as an infatuation; but it is satisfactory—if, indeed, the circumstances admit of any satisfaction—that you have allowed yourself considerable latitude in point of time, so that the scheme can be looked at in every light, and if (as I anticipate) found

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impracticable, can be abandoned without further loss of dignity.

In the first place, I should recommend any family who contemplate a visit to London on small means (and yours, I fear, are *very* small) to choose the winter months. The prevalence of fog has long made it impossible for me to return to London before May, or (in a reasonably fine spring) April, but I believe that December, January, and February are very tolerable months for people in strong health, and the keen air of March is actively beneficial to those who can stand it. Unfortunately, people with small incomes too often have delicate health; but this is a combination of misfortunes which, as you do not mention it, I hope you have so far escaped. The advantages of the winter are obvious. The short days and imperfect light will enable a scanty and shabby wardrobe to pass without unfavourable notice. There are no balls, so your girls will not be mortified by reports of gaieties in which they have no place, and, as the town is comparatively empty, you will find people more inclined to ask

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you to luncheon (or even occasionally to dinner) than during the season. And, with your straitened means, hospitalities of this kind are a matter of some moment.

As to your place of residence, I am clearly in favour of a small furnished flat somewhere in West Kensington, or, if you prefer a more bracing climate, on the upper side of Marylebone Road. My reason for recommending a flat is that I am given to understand that in a flat you can do without servants. The porter and his wife can, I believe, be induced to bring up coals, and occasionally sweep the apartments, and your daughters, who will find time hang heavy on their hands, can occupy themselves with the lighter parts of the household work, thus both amusing themselves and easing your pocket. The principal meal of the day can be procured on a tray from the adjacent pastry-cook's, and sardines, cocoa, and similar light matters will supply the material of your subsidiary meals.

I am obliged by your enquiry after my health, but the position which it occupies in your letter forbids me to regard it as much more than a conventional form,

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and I therefore do not encumber my letter with a detailed reply.

There is a proverbial saying about a lady's postscripts, too hackneyed to need repetition. I am reminded of it by your reference to the Thompsons. Poor Thompson has by no means fulfilled in manhood the promise of his youth; but fidelity to early friendship is with me a sacred principle, and the fact that he is a clerk in Somerset House has never diminished my regard for him. I am godfather to his daughter Ellen or Elaine, who has lately written to me about some foolish and impracticable scheme with which she is busying herself. Your knowledge of my circumstances will enable you to appreciate the humour of the situation when I tell you that the poor girl, being anxious to leave her parents' roof, hinted, not obscurely, that I should make a home for her! Comment is superfluous.—Affectionately yours,

A. W.-W.

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CHAPTER IV

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CHAPTER IV

PLAS CWMEFN,
September 15th.

DEAR ALGERNON,—Let me at once thank you very sincerely for your letter; frank though it was, I am truly grateful for it. I have long wished for an opportunity to tell you of my regret for the past, and of my full admission that you were right in every particular about George's affairs. Shanghai would have been the right place for him and the Church was the wrong one, and had he followed your admirable advice things would have been very different. Yet, in one respect (may I say it?) your judgment—by no fault of your own—was not so perspicacious as usual. You never understood me—and I do not blame you, for every appearance was against me. Even then, though

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I could not but deplore it, I adored your wisdom and sincerity, and it was only pique at forfeiting what I should have prized so highly that made my manner to you seem somewhat abrupt. I know (to use your father's rather crude phrase at the time) that your family considered I "threw myself at George's head," and you were not the least emphatic among them. But even had dear George possessed a head to throw oneself at, this accusation was far from the truth. Our marriage was *purely* a love match, and, to be strictly accurate, the love was much stronger on George's side than on mine. *He would have me!* I might have made several much more desirable marriages; *but I loved George.* I saw that he needed a guiding star—a business head to put order in his affairs—and so I yielded. You, dear Algernon, who are still so much made of, so attractive, you yourself must have known at some time what love was—the love of woman, which urges men to forsake worldly wisdom and to act against their personal interests. Your dear wife had, I believe, a large fortune; but before her day was not your heart

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stirred by some emotion that makes you comprehend that of poor George? If you have loved, then, dear Algernon, be merciful! And, indeed, as you so truly write, I have suffered for my folly. You speak of the agricultural depression that ruined the Quintilians. It is as nothing compared to the depression that I suffered during my union with dear George. He was always plunged in the depths. Everything about him, in fact, was low—his spirits, his Church views, his funds, and the situation of his Vicarage, which, as you remember, was built on clay. And I may add that, as compared to yours, his intellectual capacities were low also. But I have learned my lesson, and for the future, believe me, I shall act entirely on your advice.

I think when you have heard all that I have to say, you will agree with me that, after all, it will really be best for me to bring the girls to town for the summer season. In the winter I feel they would have *no* chance —besides which your kind scruples about us are happily groundless. Your almost fatherly goodness in enquiring about my income compels candour on my

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side. The fact is that I eke out our scanty pittance by writing the weekly Society Letter to the "Australasian Chimes," the famous Colonial periodical. Mine are the contributions headed "Belgravia," and signed "Tottine"; and (as I have not the advantage of being in the heart of things) I make them up from the various newspapers that I read in the Public Library at Cardiff. Nor do I object to your knowing that I also write the monthly article on Fashions for the "Cymric Madame," a flourishing local paper. The pecuniary remuneration for this work is merely nominal, but as I find occasion in my pages to praise the leading modistes of the place, the latter allow me a commission *in kind*, which is of material help in our dress expenditure. When I tell you that for more important garments, such as jackets, mantles, etc., I make it a rule to come up to London and attend the annual Lost Property Sale (a sale of all objects lost in railways, etc., which takes place in Victoria Street), you will no longer be surprised to hear that my girls are always well, even elegantly, dressed, and this at a minimum cost.

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Then as to our place of residence. On mature consideration, I think I could bring myself to live in West Kensington, provided we need not use those words in our address, but could substitute the letter W. And inferior though the poor Thompsons are, it has struck me that they might be of use in this predicament. I heard in a roundabout way that that tiresome Ellen (I will not call her Elaine) is about to take a flat for herself, and it strikes me that, if dates suit, it might be economical for us both if she found one large enough to hold us also. We would, on either side, pay half the rent, and as by this arrangement she would have the benefit of my chaperonage, the whole affair would be of signal advantage to her. I should, in fact, do it mainly for her sake, and this excuse alone would suffice to account for our living in a suburb. Between us, also, we could easily afford a maid-servant. I should be more than grateful if you would give me your opinion of this scheme, for without your sanction I will do nothing. And if there is any *feminine* service that I can ever do for you (*for love*) at Portland Place, I beg

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you to let me know that I may hasten to perform it. The touch of a woman does so much.—Your thankful sister-in-law,

MAUDE Q. WOODHOUSE.

There is no reason why the girls, especially Lilian, should not seek some lady-like employment during their mornings in London. I remember that your sweet old aunt, Lady Louisa Fitzwigan, was formerly in want of a secretary and reader. Should she still want one next May, will you think of my Lilian, who is quite a little sunbeam and has a perfect talent for reading aloud ?

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THE HALL, FEVERSHAM-SUR-STRAND,
September 20th, 1902.

DEAR MAUDE,—Your letter of the 15th inst. shows, I regret to say, a very imperfect apprehension of your past and present circumstances. I can hardly suppose that you are acquainted with the works of Bishop Butler (who must be carefully distinguished from Dr. Butler, now Master of Trinity College, Cambridge), or even with those of my lamented friend Matthew Arnold, who endeavoured to make the writings of that great philosopher intelligible to the ignorant and the half-informed. I shall therefore not offend you by telling you of a saying of Bishop Butler's on which I have been accustomed greatly to rely, and which was frequently on my lips during my loved one's prolonged illness: "Things are what they are, and the consequences of them will be what they will be; why, then, should we desire to be deceived?"

Applying this wise sentence to your own case, I

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would observe that no late regrets on your part can undo the fact that you made an extremely unwise marriage; and the consequences of that act will be, and must be, what they are—and they are lamentable enough. I dismiss as irrelevant to the present issue the immediate causes which led to your engagement, and I should do so even if my recollection of the facts tallied more precisely with yours than is the case. I may remark in passing that any enquiry into my own all-too-short experience of married happiness would be, in my view, an act of the worst possible taste, and would preclude any further correspondence with the person guilty of such an outrage on good feeling.

From this digression I return to the matter in hand. Compliments are not much to my taste, and, though I am sure that yours are both sincere and well-intended, they must not deter me from saying plainly that I deplore and even condemn your determination to bring your daughters to London for the summer. I have clearly expressed my opinion that, if you must come

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at all (and I see no necessity for, or probable advantage from, your coming, the best time for your visit would be the winter which is now beginning.

From that opinion I do not recede; and, if you persist in disregarding it, I shall hold myself absolved from any obligation to facilitate what I must consider culpable folly. As to your purely personal matters, you may have noticed that I did not even comment on a question in your former letter about Diamonds; but your allusion was too clear to be misunderstood. My loved one's jewels have been, since her death, at my Bank, *and will remain there.* If you think it necessary to wear jewellery of any kind, I should have thought that something in the way of jet or bogwood would be more suitable to your circumstances. Those circumstances are, no doubt, somewhat (though not, I should imagine, to any great extent) alleviated by the penwork which you describe; but even here a word of caution is necessary. Literature is one of the most dignified of employments, and cases have come to my knowl-

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edge where the authors of religious novels have even been able to purchase landed property with the products of their pen. But such writing as you describe falls, I fear, very far short of "literature," whether as to dignity or as to profit; and those who traffic in such slippery wares run a considerable risk of losing whatever they may have, by nature or by antecedents, in the way of self-respect and good taste.

As regards your place of residence in London (always assuming that you yield to my judgment, and come up in the winter), I incline to West Kensington. I may tell you that it is really part of the parish of Fulham; but the title of "West Kensington" has been invented by the inhabitants as tending to bring them nearer to the precincts of Society. No further modification of the address would, under the circumstances, be practicable.

No doubt, our good friends the T.'s, having a large family and very narrow means, might give you useful hints about domestic management. Whether you would find my god-daughter a pleasant, or even a

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possible, addition to your own circle, I am disposed, after reading her letters, to doubt.

I am obliged by your kind offer to help me in the management of my London house, but I am one of those who set a very high value on old servants, and I am convinced that my butler and housekeeper would resent any intrusions, however well meant.

My aunt, about whose affairs you are good enough to concern yourself, is now a confirmed invalid of the nervous type, and the mere sight of a stranger's face induces such alarming paroxysms of *paralysis agitans* that she can only see old and intimate friends.—Affectionately yours,

ALGERNON WENTWORTH-WOODHOUSE.

P.S.—I open my letter in order to append this cutting which I have just taken from the "Guardian," a weekly paper of high respectability. It is an opening which might suit one of your girls.

"WANTED—Young GENTLEWOMAN, willing to do entire work of small flat for vicar's daughter. Housework, cooking,

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needlework. State age (16 to 21). State references. State father's profession. £10.—VICARAGE, Chester Road, Dartmouth Park."

The remuneration is certainly not exorbitant, but the situation is healthy, and I dare say the duties would not be as laborious as they sound.

A. W.-W.

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CHAPTER V

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CHAPTER V

84 Bute Street, W.,
Tuesday.

MY DEAR NEPHEW,—I am addressing *you*, as I believe you to be the only member of your family who has the slightest common sense. Your poor sister Fanny was born a fool, and your brother George made himself one. The rest are cut after the same pattern. But you can, at all events, take care of yourself without giving trouble to others. I need hardly tell you that I am about to write to you upon the only subject worth considering—Health. Of course I mean bad health, and my own bad health in particular.

You may thank Heaven that you have escaped my trials, and that you and your mother's branch of the family have never known what suffering means. Your

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liver, of which I'm fully aware that you complain, cannot be said to count; for liver complaint, as every doctor will tell you, is the *ailment of strong people.* Your dear mother had it,—she was a very bilious subject,—and I have never had the slightest doubt that it was that which killed her, and not consumption, as was supposed. I know a stomach-cough when I hear it. But your parents always had a sad predisposition to coddle, and you were unfortunately brought up to do the same. I beg of you to take my advice and to have plain food and plenty of fresh air and exercise; *believe me, that is all you want.* With me, as you know, it is a very different matter. It is an old story *that I am a chronic sufferer* from my heart and my nerve-tissues. Indeed, my new doctor tells me *that my case is unique.* And this brings me to my point. I do not think I have yet told you about this last man, Dr. Chubb. I was obliged to discharge his predecessor, Riley, whom you remember as being most mendacious and incapable; he actually had the impudence to tell me I had nothing the matter with me and that I should be better if I

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lived like other people. But his departure was a blessing in disguise, for Chubb is a positive genius, and I have at last found a medical man *who understands my constitution.* I lighted upon him quite by accident at Westgate, on the Parade, where he was providentially walking when I happened to be seized with one of my Spasms—of the *cardiac* and *not* the *dyspeptic* sort. He came up to my bath-chair (I was alone with the footman), and with his extraordinary powers of diagnosis instantly recognised my symptoms and arrested them with miraculous skill—insisting also on accompanying me back to my hotel. He there made the important discovery that not only are my nerve-centres displaced, but they show every sign of complete inanition. Since then he has regularly prescribed for me, and has attended me with the utmost devotion. In fact, I brought him back to town with me, and he has for the last two months been living in my house as my salaried resident physician. He has now put me upon the *Muffin Diet,* which has already worked wonders for me. It is a diet invented by him, and is, I hear, making

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his fame. The patient takes a hot buttered muffin every two hours, and sips a tumbler of tepid water fifty minutes after eating it. The results, *for delicate digestions*, are incredible.

Unfortunately, he has now been obliged to take a rest and has gone off on a holiday to South Africa. No letters are to follow him. I have therefore resolved to consult *you*, as I am needing immediate information and know that your anxiety about your liver has led you to the study of food-stuffs. On the third day after Dr. Chubb started, I felt the premonitions of one of my cardiac spasms, and, according to the advice that he left me in case of an emergency, I increased the dose of muffins. This step on my part was followed by a violent palpitation of the heart and by a distinct sensation of sickness. I took my temperature immediately and found that it had gone down *one point*. Becoming alarmed, I had recourse to my volume of the "Universal Doctor," and there found that the symptoms evident in me were, without doubt, due to insufficient nourishment. On this I referred to my list

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of food-stuffs, but could find nothing I had not tried. Benger's Food, grape-nuts, brandy, plasmon, malt-essence, and Valentine-juice have, as you will remember, all failed with me. But as fate, or rather Providence would have it, just at this moment of my need the door opened and Mademoiselle came in with the new number of the "Respirator." I felt that it was positively *sent* me, and I was not disappointed; for the first thing my eye fell on was an article signed "Floss Rediviva" upon Spasmon, a recently invented food-stuff which seems to be infallible in its effects. The strange thing is that Floss herself suffered from the self-same symptoms as I do, and, *after being next door to death*, she gained four stone in five weeks from merely taking it regularly between meals. Without loss of time I sent off Mademoiselle to the Depot and she brought me back a bundle of the most striking "Spasmon Literature." Floss is by no means alone in her experience and Spasmon has helped hundreds. There is an extremely interesting jockey who trained for and won the Derby purely upon Spasmon Cornflour, and a poor clergy-

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man who actually rode from London to Bath upon one bar of Spasmon Chocolate. I thought it best to sift the matter thoroughly and see that there was no imposture,—you know how incredulous I am—so I wrote straight off to the jockey, the only person who gave an address, and begged him to come and see me—of course prepaying his fare from Surbiton. I made the appointment for to-day at 5.30, my best hour, and I shall thus be able to question him about his personal experiences. The clergyman unfortunately only signed himself "Clericus," and did not mention where he lived. Meanwhile, I should be obliged if you *would let me know by return* (1) what you have heard of Spasmon, (2) whether you have tried it, and (3) what results you have observed, I need not emphasise the importance of a full and speedy answer.

You might at the same time tell me of any new medicine you may lately have come across. I am fully aware that the modern craze is for a garden and the acquisition of new plants; but I still have brains and I prefer my medicine-chest as far more useful and ra-

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tional. A new tabloid is certainly more valuable than an ugly little Alpine plant that you can hardly see through a microscope. I trust that you agree with me, and, pray, if you don't, do not trouble to tell me so. Remember to write at once, and believe me to remain, your affectionate aunt,

LOUISA FITZWIGAN.

Will you at the same time send me the address of the shop in Piccadilly where you get your *marrons glacés*? I find they do me so much good.

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THE HALL, FEVERSHAM-SUR-STRAND,
October 1st, 1902.

MY DEAR AUNT,—That I value your good opinion need scarcely be said; but to mingle it with disparagement of other members of my family was unnecessary, and even thoughtless. My Sisters, though certainly not highly educated women, are, I gather, quite able to hold their own in the intellectual circles of Torquay, and I understand that their Vicar considers them excellent district-visitors. Poor George is gone where his failings will not be called in question; and, though his marriage was certainly so improvident as to be almost inconsistent with sanity, it is only fair to remember that he paid a lifelong penalty for it. I do not scruple to say (in the confidence of family affection) that I always considered his wife one of the most objectionable people I ever encountered, and some recent correspondence with her has not tended to modify that opinion.

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Of the fatal folly of neglecting one's health, poor George's premature death was indeed a striking illustration; but it is to be remembered that his Vicarage was considerably below the level of the churchyard, and that his drinking-water was unquestionably impregnated by emanations from that very undesirable neighbour. When we further remember that he was a teetotaller, and that his means did not permit of a very nourishing diet, perhaps we should rather wonder why he lived so long. For my own part, I do not scruple to avow that from my earliest days the maintenance of my health has seemed to me a sacred duty. That view of it was impressed upon me by those excellent parents of whom—pardon my filial tenderness—you speak a little lightly, and I have ever endeavoured to act upon their precepts. I was brought up on cod-liver oil, bark, and port wine. Summer and winter, I have always worn flannel next the skin. I have invariably slept with one hot-water bottle at my feet and another in the abdominal region, and in damp weather I have relied a good deal on goloshes. Whether this plan

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of life can be justly or even decently described as "coddling" is a question which I decline to argue. Your next point is of more practical importance. You speak of "plain food," and this is a subject on which I entertain very definite views. When I read the Life of Archbishop Benson (admittedly a man of ability and character), I was struck by his admiration of "a plain but perfect table." The words made an indelible impression on my mind. It is seldom that a vital and far-reaching truth can be condensed into so terse a phrase. My experience exactly tallies with the Archbishop's. My constitution imperatively demands that my diet should be "plain but perfect." I must not be kept waiting for dinner a moment after eight o'clock, and dinner must begin with three tablespoons of *consommé*, very clear and very hot. *Hors d'œuvres* are not allowed to appear at my table. Fish—a good deal of it, and of the best quality—is indispensable. It is a great regret to me that, in middle life, I feel a certain repulsion from the greased paper in which red mullet is encased; for it is a fish which, in days of more

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vigorous health, was an unfailing restorative. Whitebait suits me if it is *very* crisp and quite small; but perhaps crimped salmon is the most easily assimilated of all fish-foods. I always insist on Christchurch salmon, and I lay stress on the crimping. (The pseudo-humanitarian outcry against cruelty to the fish may be dismissed as the merest cant.) In the question of *entrées*, I find nature less exacting. *All entrées are wholesome*, provided that they are the best specimens of their kind. A *bad entrée* should be avoided like a pestilence.

Joints should, I think, be eschewed by all who have to bear the burden of a delicate digestion; and a beefsteak is quite as dangerous as a cannon-ball. A boiled chicken is very safe, and sea-kale is a valuable adjunct. Here, again, I plead for *plainness*. White sauce and slices of lemon are as unwholesome as they are vulgar. All game is wholesome—indeed, a wild pheasant (on no account a tame pheasant fed on Indian corn), following strong *consommé* and the right fish, and itself succeeded by a light savoury, often constitutes my din-

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ner. The date reminds me that my shooting is let, subject only to the requirements of my own table; and I often regret that this arrangement precludes me from the happiness of sending game to my relations.

Such, then, is my general doctrine of diet. To follow it out in detail, and to supplement it with theories about breakfast and luncheon, and the choice of beverages, would carry me far beyond the limits of a letter. And, as it is, I see that I have not left myself much space for an adequate appreciation of the distressing symptoms which you describe in your own case. Let me, then, say at once, and briefly, that nervous illness is a subject with which I have no acquaintance, and not much sympathy. A free use of mineral waters, coupled with a light but nutritious diet, is the remedy which, basing myself on my own experience, I always recommend. With your tendency to palpitation, probably the diet should be more light than generous. As to Spasmon biscuits and the like, I will only say, shortly but emphatically, that I set my face like a flint against all quackery. Mrs. Watkins shall answer your

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question about *marrons glacés*. My own dinner ends with the savoury: up to that point everything is ordered by myself; after it I trust to the servants.

I am writing in haste to save the post, but I cannot forbear to express my satisfaction that you do not mention among your many ailments *paralysis agitans*. A rumour reached me that one of your visitors had been much alarmed by seeing you under an attack of that distressing complaint. After what you tell me, I am inclined to connect the symptoms with the muffin treatment. How people, beyond their first youth, can play such tricks with their health is to me inconceivable.—In haste, your affectionate nephew,

ALGERNON.

To-morrow I accomplish my fiftieth year. It is a great happiness that one of my dear aunts is still spared to me. I sincerely wish her better health, *and a wiser regimen*.

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CHAPTER VI

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CHAPTER VI

BUTE STREET, W.,
October 3d.

MY DEAR NEPHEW,—I will not waste time in thanking you for your letter, as it gave me no answer to any of the questions that I put to you. What it did give me was a detailed account of your own *régime*, which, though no doubt exceedingly interesting to yourself, was not of the slightest use to me, unless to explain more certainly what I have always suspected—the real reason of your biliousness. *Crimped salmon* is enough to cause dyspepsia in an ostrich, and it is only your mother's constitution which could have digested it for so long. That you are alive, and evidently enjoying the good things of this life, is, I am thankful to observe, sufficient proof of your splendid

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strength. Long may it continue! As for me, it is not on the things of this earth that my affections are set; my cardiac delicacy has long since turned them *elsewhere*, and taught me that comfort is not to be found in this life. Yet, though we are but sojourners here, it is our duty to resign ourselves and to live; and even a muffin, *eaten in submission to a higher law*, does (as Dr. Chubb so beautifully says) become an act of spiritual discipline. As for the *paralysis agitans* of which you speak, it is known to be a purely hysterical complaint, from which, I need hardly add, I have never suffered. The nervous tremblings which attack me when anybody talks to me too long, or dwells upon distressing subjects, *particularly their own illnesses or troubles*, proceed from a spasmodic debility of the heart acting upon a *highly sensitive nature*, and can alone be remedied by *frequent nourishment*. But this is only part of the trial which has been sent me and I trust I know how to meet it.

I should not be writing to you so soon again for the mere purposes of a correspondence which can hardly

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be said to be pleasurable to me; but I think you may be of use to me in a serious predicament that has arisen. Whatever your indifference to my symptoms (and how should the robust understand them?), you will hardly fail to remember that a Companion has always been essential to me—one who will take from my shoulders such domestic responsibilities (both as to housekeeping and otherwise) as, in my case, would be fatal; a lady, too, of good manners, good health, and good temper, qualified to read aloud as long as I wish it. You will also recall Mademoiselle, who has hitherto fulfilled these easy requirements. The other day (that of the fog) was one of my worst days, and I found that I had no novel to amuse me. Devotional literature and novels—if possible, French ones—are the only books my health now permits me to read and I was anxious to send to Mudie's at once. My butler, as you know, has been with me for twenty years and, naturally, at his age, refuses to go on any errands—indeed, with my strong principle of regard for old servants, I should never ask him to do so. The poor young

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footman has an affection of the larynx which makes exposure to fog perilous for him. Under these circumstances, I, of course, requested Mademoiselle, who is as strong as a horse, to do this for me. What was my surprise when she objected, alleging a cold (quite invisible to others) as her reason and declaring, with the most unseemly obstinacy, that the fog would make it worse; and this, though she saw that I had the first symptoms of one of my heart attacks. I think I may say with truth that I am indulgent, perhaps over-indulgent, to the faults of others, both my principles and disposition inclining me towards mercy. But there is one fault with which I do not *wish* to have patience, and that is *valetudinarianism*—the worst sort of selfishness, as Dr. Chubb has often said to me. Besides, I have always heard that fog is *really wholesome for strong people.* I therefore insisted on Mademoiselle's instant obedience. Would you believe that when she returned she pretended, with an unpardonable display of temper, that she had lost her voice, and she even *refused to read to me?* Not only this, but when

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I summoned her a second time I was told that she had retired to bed, and had actually had the face to send for the doctor! I make but one rule for my dependants, and that is that no one in the house may send for or consult a physician without my consent. I know too well that there is no habit so pernicious as that of a growing dependence upon a medical man. The woman who could act thus behind my back would certainly do worse, and I therefore gave Mademoiselle notice *in writing* without further loss of time. Of course she must stay here until I am suited, but she shall then leave my house at once—and, meanwhile, I am most disagreeably placed, as she refuses to rise from her bed and has evidently persuaded the doctor to say she has a species of bronchitis.

Can you help me, dear Algernon, in this emergency by recommending any suitable *lady* among your numerous acquaintance? I am induced to apply to you by the remembrance that you once talked of some such person whom you were anxious to place. I should like her to be *quite young*—of an age when she can still

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be completely moulded by me (Mademoiselle was much too old); she must also, in addition to the usual qualifications of sobriety and respectability, be thoroughly willing and healthy, sufficiently plain, and accustomed to read aloud *on end*. She should have a pleasant voice, and *no religious opinions*. In return for her services I would give her £40 a year, her wash, and all such outdoor garments of my own as I discard; the rest go to my maid. It is needless to emphasize the fact that a thorough lady is essential to me.

Kindly answer me by return—as succinctly and with as little reference to your own constitution as is possible. I am in the midst of a severe spasm, due, as I need not explain, to Mademoiselle's conduct; and this letter has been a sad strain upon my strength.—Believe me to remain, your affectionate aunt,

LOUISA FITZWIGAN.

Your nephew Frank announces his return from the Continent and proposes visiting me. I fear he is but a rolling stone.

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THE HALL, FEVERSHAM-SUR-STRAND,
October 8th, 1902.

MY DEAR AUNT,—The respect due to your advanced age and many infirmities makes me anxious to avoid even the appearance of harshness, but I will frankly say that, were you a younger woman, or in better health, I should either have ignored your letter or have used great plainness of speech in reply. The question of diet (though introduced by you) is now, I understand, dismissed from our correspondence, and you will not, I am sure, wish me to engage in a futile debate as to the relative gravity of our respective symptoms. At the same time, you must not imagine that I for an instant accept your theory of my constitution and its ailments.

It is idle to quote the oracles of Dr. Chubb. I have a rooted objection to all dogmatism, whether clerical or medical, and greatly resent the assumption of au-

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thority by those whom I pay. I distinctly recollect my strong feeling of displeasure when the late Sir Andrew Clark, after dissuading me from eating curried lobster at breakfast, said, "I seek to impose a yoke upon you, that you may be truly free." If I were to characterise this language as solemn claptrap, I should not be exceeding the bounds of fair criticism.

You do me no more than justice when you assume that I shall recollect the fact that for some time past you have had a Companion. You, on your part, will no doubt remember that I took exception to your habit of bringing her (as well as a maid and a footman) with you when you came to stay here. My suggestion that she should be left at home led to a cessation of those visits which, on other grounds, I had welcomed. Into the merits of the dispute between yourself and Mademoiselle, I am not disposed to enter. Had I the opportunity of hearing that unfortunate woman's version, it would probably throw a different light on the transaction. I hope you will not deem it offensive if I say that a solitary and self-centred life is very apt

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to engender an unreasonable and exacting temper in our treatment of dependants.

My own case is very different. Debarred from the pursuits of active life, I have long found my chief happiness in the endeavour to help others; and I should be glad if I could extricate you from any domestic difficulty, even though I might suspect that it was in part of your own making. On learning, therefore, that you required a new Companion, I immediately turned my thoughts to a quarter which seemed not unlikely to supply what you want. You write, rather vaguely, about a "person whom I am anxious to place." I know, of course, that even the best memories cannot be preserved intact into extreme old age, but I should have thought that you would remember at least the names (if not the wants) of your own great-nieces. My poor brother George (who made, you will recollect, that very undesirable marriage) left his widow and daughters wholly unprovided for. My sister-in-law, looking about for some opening for her girls (who, I am told, are both plain and uneducated), suggested

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that one of them might be able to act as Companion and *lectrice;* and, curiously enough, she mentioned your name in this connection. Is it possible that she had some private understanding with Mademoiselle? I should not be surprised if it were so, for reduced circumstances have brought her into very strange society. But, be this as it may, soon after the receipt of your letter I communicated its contents to my sister-in-law, who to-day telegraphs as follows: "Lilian enchanted if acceptable. All coming up winter season. Lodgings till flat procured." If this suggestion commends itself to you, I must leave you to settle all particulars with Mrs. George Woodhouse; and I must be distinctly understood to accept *no responsibility* for the character, qualifications, or conduct of my niece.—Your affectionate nephew,

A. W.-W.

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CHAPTER VII

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CHAPTER VII

ANHALT-DESSAU GARDENS, CAMPDEN HILL
(for the last time).
November 7th.

MY DEAR GODFATHER,—May I send you this one line to tell you that, thanks to the encouragement you gave me—the words that came even as light to one walking in the wilderness—I have been able to fulfil my Aim? I am *free.* I am not one of many words, but let me tell you only this, I am the better for having known you. Life—yes, and beyond Life—will never be quite the same again. Some little time ago your sister-in-law wrote to me from Wales, saying she did so by your advice, and, after many too kind allusions to my gifts, which I should blush to repeat to you, she opened out her scheme of coming to live in London next spring, and of sharing a flat with some artistic

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lady who would direct her literary taste and undertake the half of the expenses. She mentioned two daughters, but said that they would probably both be absent the whole time of her tenancy, and she added—what made me feel a sense of Fellow-Soulship—that she could not live with the ordinary conventional woman. What she heard of me from you had made her feel that, could we but come together, a new chapter of life might open for both of us. I felt, too, that the advantages she pointed out were such as could not be neglected; for, as she truly says, however free one is oneself from the trammels of common custom, one's poor parents are not so; and who knows better than I how tightly they are still swaddled in the narrow tape of blind prejudice? With great sense, she saw that my father would be much more likely to approve of my departure from the Ruck and from my home if she were there as a (merely nominal) chaperone. And, indeed, she has proved to be right. My interview with my father has been more successful than I could have dared to hope. Surely the tiny seed may sprout

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and spring even upon the stony soil of red tape, and the large Aim may help the narrow mind. Not only did he consent to my going, *but* (*though you may not believe it*) *he seemed glad to do so*, and he himself suggested giving me an allowance which I could not have expected from his means. I told him of my resolve to take nothing of a pecuniary nature from him and to live for Art's sake; but he laughed (it was the only moment at which the Philistine peered forth), and said I should be nearer the mark if I talked of dying for Art's sake, and that Art was one thing and my Novel was another. It was of no use to explain his error to him and I merely asked to have time for reflection. It is unfortunate that my poor father can never refrain from a humourless facetiousness.

"Reflect as long as you like," he said, "but, believe me, you won't get any food out of the publishers excepting humble pie, and that is not very satisfying."

I merely repeat his remarks to show you the sort

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of mental level from which I am escaping. After due consideration in my own room, I came to the conclusion that, since giving enlarges the smaller nature, it would be selfish to refuse his soul the grace of a generous deed—and that chivalry lay in acceptance. I have therefore fallen in with his offer. It was well that this was arranged, for only two days later I got a telegram from Mrs. Quintilian Woodhouse begging me to look for a flat at once, as she was coming to town for the winter. I believe that I have actually found one—3F Aboukir Mansions, Pietermaritzburg Grove, West Kensington; but I will let you know definitely in a few days.

Again let me bless you for what you have done for me. I am re-reading *Daniel Deronda*, and I cannot but trace the resemblance between Daniel and you. Did you ever know George Eliot, and has she thus tried to catch your portrait, I wonder?—Your thankful godchild,

ELAINE.

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THE HALL, FEVERSHAM-SUR-STRAND,
November 10th, 1902.

DEAR MISS ELLEN,—You know me well enough to be sure that I should not willingly say anything which might tend to discourage you, or to dash your hopes. But I feel constrained to observe that, in dating your letter from your father's house "*for the last time*," you seem to be unduly sanguine. You do not, I think, know my sister-in-law, Mrs. G. Woodhouse, except by correspondence. Personal intercourse is a very different matter. To live under the same roof with even one's nearest relations is sometimes, as you know, a severe strain on one's endurance; and to share the expenses of housekeeping with one of whose character and idiosyncrasies you know nothing seems to me an experiment fraught with peril. It may succeed, but much more probably it will fail; and in that case you will have once more to date your letters from your father's house. Under

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these circumstances, I, as your friend, should deprecate any undue manifestation of joy on the attainment of what you regard as freedom.

I note that my sister-in-law has actually taken a flat for the winter. As you will necessarily be in correspondence with her, and as I have little leisure for superfluous letter-writing, I should be obliged if you would tell her that I am prepared to make some contribution towards the furnishing of the flat. My housekeeper tells me that there is a good deal of furniture put away in the lumber-room in Portland Place.

My dear wife was in later years a good deal bitten by the æsthetic craze (for such I esteem it), and insisted on covering the drawing-room walls with Morris's papers. Her health was at that time so precarious that I felt bound to humour her every whim; but I soon had occasion to regret my compliance. As soon as the rooms were re-papered, she declared that the furniture (excellent of its style and date) was unsuitable to the paper, which, she said, required

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sea-green plush and white paint. A large horsehair sofa and a complete set of mahogany chairs were therefore discarded, and the curtains, of crimson rep with handsome gilt cornices, made way for what my poor wife called an "art fabric." My housekeeper tells me that all these things are in good preservation, and I shall be happy to lend them to my sister-in-law for use in her flat during the winter. She, of course, must undertake to fetch them from Portland Place, and send them back, and she will naturally be answerable for any damage which they may sustain. I am told that life in a flat is, in all respects, very rough.

Beyond this contribution, I fear that I shall not be able to do much in furtherance of the scheme of joint housekeeping, to which (rashly, as it seems to me) you and Mrs. G. Woodhouse have committed yourselves. Of course you acted rightly in accepting your father's offer of an allowance; but, as I said when you first consulted me, I should regard it as an indelicacy to intervene in the pecuniary relations be-

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tween you and your parents. In these matters consanguinity is the only possible ground of appeal, and even the claims of consanguinity are often overstrained. I have reason to believe that one of my nephews will soon be soliciting my assistance in some professional enterprise, and this fact makes circumspection in money matters even more than usually necessary.—Yours sincerely attached,

ALGERNON WENTWORTH-WOODHOUSE.

P.S.—I had no acquaintance with the late Mrs. Cross, whom her admirers pedantically called "George Eliot." Your father professed to admire her writings, and once told me that I resembled one of the characters in *Daniel Deronda*. I never read the book, but, if I remember aright, the character in question was called Grandcourt, or some such name.

A. W.-W.

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CHAPTER VIII

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CHAPTER VIII

BACHELORS' CLUB, PICCADILLY, W.,
December 1st.

MY DEAR UNCLE,—I was ever so sorry to hear the other day from Aunt Maude that you were rather seedy. I hope you are quite fit again by this time. I wonder if it would be convenient to you if I ran down to Feversham for two or three days, somewhere between now and February 1st? There are two or three things which I want to consult you about, and, as I know you are always pretty busy, I don't like to bother you with unnecessary letters. Perhaps you saw in the *Times*, a short time back, that I had got called to the Bar at last. I am thankful to have done with exams. for ever, but had to fork out £100, which is rather a big tooth. You know you always were

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very keen that I should have a profession, and certainly you were quite right. A fellow without a profession is always considered a "Waster." But the difference between the Bar and other professions is that one can't live on it, even partially. I don't suppose I shall get a brief for ten years to come, and I'm sure I don't know what sort of a job I should make of it if I got it. Meanwhile, as you know, I haven't got much of my own, and I find that the rent of my rooms, my Club subscriptions, etc., make a pretty good hole in what I have. Under these circumstances, I am thinking of trying my hand at literature. I used to write a good deal in the *Harrovian* when I was at Harrow, and I have got an unfinished novel which the editors wouldn't put in, because they thought it was too full of racing, and would encourage fellows to bet. I have thought about finishing it, and sending it to one of the monthly magazines; or I might do some social intelligence for one of the Society papers. I really like writing, and think I could make something of it Anyhow, it would

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be a great advantage to me to have your advice, and perhaps, if you approve, some introductions to your literary friends.

Aunt Maude seems very comfortably settled in her flat. It is rather out of the way, but all right when you get there. *She is delighted with your red curtains from Portland Place.* She says they make the rooms look "so warm and cosy." She has got a most extraordinary girl staying with her—Elaine Thompson by name—who says she is your god-daughter. I fancy she is literary.—Your affectionate nephew,

FRANK MURRAY.

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THE HALL, FEVERSHAM-SUR-STRAND,
December 3d, 1902.

DEAR FRANCIS,—(I dislike nicknames),—Yes, I have been unwell—I generally am unwell in changeable weather. But that is no new experience, and I have no wish to inflict my sufferings upon my relations. I am better than I was a fortnight ago, but by no means what you call "fit." (I dislike slang as much as I dislike nicknames, and I hold that both have a common root—Vulgarity.)

I have no objection to your coming here on a short visit, if you really wish to consult me on business. But, of course, you would find no Christmas festivities here, and *my shooting is let*. I say this on account of your pointed allusion to February 1st.

I did not notice the announcement that you had been called to the Bar, and I am relieved to learn the fact. Those repeated failures in your examination were extremely discreditable. The circumstance of having

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had to pay £100 will necessitate a very strict economy during the year 1903, and I am very much afraid that your habits are not economical. Is the Bachelors' a cheap Club? And have you more than one?

Certainly I wished you to have a profession. A man without a profession (unless, as in my case, he happens to have considerable means) is justly despised; but as to the choice of a particular profession, being of age, you were entirely your own master.

Your position has always seemed to me a very unfortunate one. Your father's early death left you under the sole control of my poor sister, who did her best to spoil you. She brought you up in a way which your expectations did not justify. I always thought it was folly to send you to Harrow. The City of London School, or Giggleswick, where you would have been made to work and would have cost much less, would have been in every way more suitable. At Harrow, where the fees were a heavy drain on your mother's small resources, I gathered from

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your tutor that you were systematically idle. Dr. Welldon, whom I used to meet occasionally at my Club, told me that you wasted your time in writing nonsense for the school-newspaper, instead of applying yourself to those solid studies which conduce to success in after-life.

Then your going abroad, on the pretext of learning modern languages, was, in my opinion, a mere farce. I am told that you spent all your time in Alpine climbing, sketching, and teaching the daughters of the Swiss Pasteur with whom you lived, to sing comic songs in English. You returned to England, as you left it, uneducated. You were too old to begin reading for the Army, and moreover your means would not enable you to live in any tolerable regiment. You had none of the gifts requisite for business. I could have induced my good friend, the Bishop of Barchester, to ordain you without a degree (after a year at his Theological College), but you protested, I thought rather affectedly, against the idea of making Holy Orders a profession. Under

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these circumstances, the Bar seemed the only possible resort. It is certainly more respectable than idleness, but I do not in the least anticipate that you will ever be able to make money at it. It is unlucky that your mother died before you came of age, for a small independence is one of the greatest misfortunes which can befall a young man. As to your literary projects, I cannot bring myself to regard them very seriously; but you can tell me more about them if you come here.

Your Aunt Maude knows that I think she has done an exceedingly foolish thing in coming to London for the winter; but it is not so foolish as coming for the summer, which she originally proposed. I am exceedingly annoyed to hear that she calls herself "Mrs. Quintilian-Woodhouse." Certainly she was born Quintilian, but she is now "Mrs. George Woodhouse," and nothing more.

Yes—Miss Ellen Thompson is my god-daughter; and I am bound to say that she sometimes presumes too far on that rather shadowy relationship.—Your affectionate uncle, A. W.-W.

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CHAPTER IX

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CHAPTER IX

BACHELORS' CLUB,
Christmas Eve.

MY DEAR UNCLE,—First and foremost, I must wish you all the best wishes of the season. I am afraid your Christmas can't be exactly "merry." It must be awful work keeping Christmas alone in that big house; but I hope you will contrive to be happy in a quiet way, and that the New Year may bring you better health.

Next, I must tell you how much I enjoyed myself at Feversham. It was awfully good of you to have me, especially as you were still so seedy. I really didn't the least mind having no shooting. I'm not dead keen on it, and I am always perfectly happy in the country, as long as I can go mouching round with a stick and a pipe and a dog. Then that day with

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the hounds was ripping. Now hunting, if you like, I am really keen about, and of course I have never had much of it. It was great luck that I fixed my visit to you just on the day when the hounds were meeting actually at your park-gates. By the way, the landlord of the "Woodhouse Arms" wouldn't let me pay for my gee, but said that you kept a running account with him for flys, etc., and that he could charge my day's hunting to you. Of course I told him that you had not said anything about that to me, and that I had no right to expect it of you; but he insisted that it was all right; and I can only say that I am tremendously obliged to you for giving me a real treat.

I have been thinking a good lot over that long conversation we had in the library. I feel most awfully the truth of what you said. It is quite true that I have wasted my time most shockingly up to date. I daresay, if I had been sent to some beastly school, such as those you mentioned, it would be better for me now. I suppose at such holes as those there

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is nothing to do but work, and so a fellow takes to working in spite of himself. Perhaps if I had been sent there I should have been no end of a swell scholar long before this. But I must say I am rather glad my poor dear mother chose Harrow for me, all the same. I had a really good time there, and made a lot of friends. I was there with some fellows called Longman, and I fancy their father is a publisher. I am thinking of looking them up and consulting them about my literary schemes.

Of course it is not very good form for a fellow to crack up his own performances, but I can't help thinking if you had let me read you my unfinished MS. of "Girls at Goodwood," you would have liked it. It's true that I don't know very much about girls, except the Miss Posers at Harrow (they are rippers—you know I was in old Poser's House) and the Pasteur's daughters in Switzerland. But I know a goodish deal about Goodwood; and you, having been married and all that, could have helped me about the girls.

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Of course, if you had positively said that you disapproved of my trying my hand at literature, I should not have persevered with the notion, for I feel how much all your nephews and nieces owe to you; but, as you only seem doubtful about my chance of succeeding, I think I will try my luck. When people have such bad health as you, I fancy it makes them despondent about other people. That Miss Thompson whom I met at Aunt Maude's seemed a rather clever girl, and she strongly urged me to finish my novel and have a shy with it at one of the magazines.—With renewed good wishes, your affectionate nephew,

FRANCIS WOODHOUSE MURRAY.

Did you know that my second name was Woodhouse? My mother gave it me because she had such a tremendous feeling about her family, and you.

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ABOUKIR MANSIONS, PIETERMARITZBURG GROVE,
December 25th
(*traditionally called Christmas Day*).

DEAR MR. MURRAY,—Do you remember a visit you lately paid at a flat in the far West of London? If you do, you may also recall a dark-haired girl who poured out tea. *She* has not forgotten; her name is Elaine, and it is she who is now writing to you.

I have ever warred against traditions. They are, so I hold, the iron railings which narrow the forest of the individual mind—the iron railings which enter into the soul—and it is because I disbelieve in them that I offer no worldling's excuse for writing to you now. If two spirits have found one another, why should they not proclaim the truth each to each? And I *have* found you. As you entered, more profoundly still as you left, I felt a current flow between us—that mysterious Something which makes Woman conscious that she has thought the same thoughts as Man. So

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strong was it in me that I *know* (how I cannot tell you) that you have felt it too.

As I believe I told you, I give up my life to Art. I write. And I feel instinctively that you alone can judge truly of my writing—that you alone will recognise my Aims and understand my Style and help me onwards in the thorny path of truth. Will you do this for me? May I send you my MSS. (postage paid)? They consist of a Realistico-Spiritual Novel, "The Woof-Warp," not yet finished, and a small (also incomplete) volume of poems, which, till this moment, I have kept secret from all. It is called "Bogwood and Carbuncles—The Versicles of a Lonely Spirit." It is very small—it is very personal—very sincere. After your visit, two days ago, I added another poem —which I venture to enclose.

TO THE UNKNOWN KNOWN.

I wandered lonely as a child
Lost on life's waste—with fevered feet.
I tasted all its awful Sweet;
The wind of Love blew fierce and wild.

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I heard a voice across the deeps
And felt 'twas thine, I know not why.
I had no language but a cry:
You called as unto one who sleeps.

I dreamed a dream and hold it true.
In sooth, I knew thee long ago—
Before we throbbed with mortal woe,
When I was very near to you.

For us there is no Now nor Then—
I am for ever by thy side.
Thou art of old my Star, my Guide,
I choose thee from the sons of Men.

I know how unworthy these little lines are, but such as you see them they are, at least, firsthand. Accept them, therefore, as they are meant.—With all serious thoughts, and spirit-greetings, believe me, yours always, ELAINE THOMPSON.

I implore you for the real truth about my MS.

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CHAPTER X

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CHAPTER X

THE HALL, FEVERSHAM-SUR-STRAND,
January 6th, 1903.

DEAR FRANCIS,—I believe that one or two of your recent letters have remained unanswered. The ownership of a large landed property brings with it cares which, fortunately for yourself, you are never likely to experience; and those cares are more than usually pressing just at the beginning of the New Year. Your letters have, therefore, been displaced by more important matters, and even now I can only deal with them in a very summary fashion.

1. As regards your day's hunting, the landlord of the "Woodhouse Arms" had absolutely no right to charge your horse-hire to my account. But, knowing how extremely narrow your means are, I have con-

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sented to make the payment, for *this occasion only*. You will clearly understand that this concession is not to be drawn into a precedent. I cannot leave the subject without saying that, in my judgment, hunting is a most unsuitable amusement for a young man in your pecuniary position. Of course you will say that you must have exercise; but you could find it quite sufficiently in some such inexpensive game as hockey.

2. As regards the question of double surnames, your last letter showed a rather unbecoming levity. I was not aware, till you told me, that you had been christened Woodhouse. Had I known it at the time of your christening I should have protested. There is an odious tendency in the present day to create double surnames by prefixing a Christian name to the surname proper, and uniting the two by a hyphen. Against that tendency (to my mind the very height of affectation and vulgarity) I thought it a duty to warn you, when you signed yourself Francis *Woodhouse* Murray. The right, because unassum-

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ing, signature in your case would be "F. W. Murray."

But you had the questionable taste to quote my signature in justification of your own. It is difficult to believe that you do not see the palpable difference between the two cases. You probably learned from your mother that we are the Woodhouses of Feversham, and have been such for several centuries. Woodhouse, then, is my patronymic. My grandfather married one of the Wentworths of Yorkshire, and brought into the family an estate in the West Riding which is now covered with collieries of considerable value. The possessor of that estate is bound, by my great-grandfather's will, to bear the name of Wentworth jointly with, and prefixed to, his patronymic; so I am Wentworth-Woodhouse, and I quarter the arms of Wentworth with my own. But no one besides myself has the smallest pecuniary interest in the Wentworth property. It is at my absolute disposal, and my brothers and sisters were provided for out of the Feversham estate. This being the case, there was no reason

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why they should be called Wentworth; their name is Woodhouse, *simpliciter*. Similarly, your name is Murray, *simpliciter;* and for you to assume a surname which your mother surrendered by her marriage, would be not vulgar only, but absurd.

While I am on this subject, I may remark that I have repeatedly protested against your Aunt Maude's retention of her maiden name; but this is a matter between her and myself.

3. I really cannot bring myself to write sympathetically about your relations with Miss Ellen Thompson. It is a very common form of vanity among young men to fancy that every girl they meet is in love with them. From such coxcombry as this I should have hoped that a nephew of mine would be free, but your last letter makes me feel uncertain. If, on farther enquiry, I find that Miss Thompson's conduct really bears the construction which you put upon it, my course will be clear. I must immediately renounce all communication with her, and revoke the small legacy which, as her godfather, I had left her. I must inform

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her father of her indiscretion, and I must withdraw my countenance and support from your Aunt Maude, who seems to have fostered this very undesirable intimacy.—Your affectionate uncle,

ALGERNON WENTWORTH-WOODHOUSE.

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ABOUKIR MANSIONS, PIETERMARITZBURG GROVE,
Thursday.

MY DEAR ALGERNON,—I have not heard from you for a long time, but please do not take this as a complaint. I know so well that nervous invalids can write but few letters. But I also know that they like getting them, and that a nice, bright, chatty letter thoroughly cheers them up, and so I am writing to you to tell you how we are getting on. I can fortunately give you the best of bulletins about our social progress. My eldest girl has not yet come to town, as she is staying with friends at Cardiff, but she has already had an invitation to a winter-season dance—a little fancy-dress hop at some friends of the Thompsons at Balham. And that brings me to Ellen T. In some ways she is better than I expected. She is, of course, very moody; and, as she wants to be literary, she would never allow herself to be equable, even had

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she any temptation in that direction. To do her justice, I don't think her bad temper is a pose; it is pure nature. But it's not the sort of temper I mind —*she* calls it sensitiveness—and it never interferes with my domestic arrangements, or with anything of real importance in life. She can always soothe herself by reading her own poetry. And she has many advantages. She eats very little and doesn't know what she is eating; she leaves all the ordering of the household to me, and as long as I talk of her Strong Will she submits to everything I wish.

Then she knows a fair number of people, to whom she has introduced me. Of course they are not quite the sort I want, but one must begin somewhere, and her set is very interesting. The other night we had a teeny-weeny *soirée* (only light refreshments, which Ellen contributed, as the guests were her friends), and it was a great success. We had a good many celebrities. There was Tristram Cripps, the famous Esoteric-Boudh-Healer, who cures "by sight." As far as I can make out, this means that he looks at

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his patients in a particular way (it's a sort of moral trick) several times running; and I hear he is successful even in the case of mortal illness. After this comes the Renunciation Phase, in which the invalids themselves take part. I don't remember all they are supposed to do, but I know they have to say "Nirvana" to themselves while they dress and undress and when they take exercise. We also had his friend, Ambrose Brocoli. He has Italian blood in him, and is an ardent Vegetarian. His dress-suit is made of Jaeger material, but otherwise he looks rather handsome. Then there were two others: Ellen's great friend Mr. Toms, the poet who wrote "Oh, woodlouse, tell me something new!"—that sweet little poem which had such a success a short while ago; and Roland Crass, whose real name is Mary Jones, the author of "The Sin of Susan Sark and other Episodes." The Episodes are decidedly *strong*, and it is really rather clever of her to write them as she cannot be more than nineteen. I think you would have liked our Impressionist Painter, Gorham-Gotts; he has such intel-

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lectual theories. He believes that the only *true* way of looking at things is upside down, and so he paints his pictures in this way, and, of course, no one will buy them. Ellen says he is a Martyr to Truth. He believes, too, that all our complexions are really lilac *au fonds;* but perhaps that is because he only knows his own friends. He has invited me to tea in his studio next week, and it will be most interesting and artistic to go. I wish you could see our little flat; we have made it so quaint with a few Japanese fans and draperies. Your warm rep curtains came in very nicely for my bedroom and your piece of linoleum was just right for the pantry.

I must not close this letter without giving you news of my precious Lilian. She is getting on extremely well with your sweet old aunt, and has found *quite* a new friend there in the resident physician, Dr. Chubb. She sees a good deal of him, and says his conversation is so very improving that he is like an education in himself and she must make the most of her privileges. Dear Lilian has always responded to

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the highest influences. I hope that you may soon allow me to bring her to see you and express her gratitude for your kindness.—Ever, dear Algernon, yours affectionately,

MAUDE Q. WOODHOUSE.

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BUTE STREET, W.,
Friday Evening.

DEAR ALGERNON,—This is only a line to tell you that Dr. Chubb has returned from Africa and finds a distinct increase in my Chronic symptoms. Under these circumstances you must be prepared for anything; but if any mortal man can pull me through, it *is* Dr. Chubb, and he has certainly been *sent* to me at the moment of my need. He has substituted cream-cheese for muffins, and the change seems to be working well. I find your niece quite a tolerable girl—insignificant, and very shy before Dr. Chubb; but that, of course, is natural, especially as he never addresses her. She is certainly a relief after Mademoiselle, and has not the slightest pretension to any sort of illness. Her voice in reading aloud and her French accent are both most disagreeable. It is time for my tonic, so I must stop.—Your affectionate aunt,

LOUISA FITZWIGAN.

Should my new symptoms lead to anything serious, you will be informed of it by telegram.

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CHAPTER XI

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CHAPTER XI

CHEYNE ROW, CHELSEA,
January 8th, 1903.

MY DEAR FRANK,—It did me good to see you the other day, and it was nice of you to come. As I have often said, I find your mother again in you—and, as you know, she was my greatest friend. Life has never been the same since she died. Well, here are you twenty-four years old and aspiring to a literary career. And here am I, who held you in my arms when you were born, almost an old woman. Yet I confess I feel younger now than when I was your age. Perhaps that *reductio ad absurdum* does not happen so much with men as it does with women. Age is a matter of the heart, and if you keep your heart fresh with use and allow it to have light and air and the proper number of constitutionals, it does not easily

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grow wintry. Men, as I take it, get over their hearts rather early in existence, and so have nothing to keep young with, though, when they are about fifty, they often take the poor, stiff, disused things out of a drawer and urge them into a fictitious life again. Don't be like that, Frank! Exercise your heart generously, whether in love or friendship, and you will never find the slightest need to manufacture spurious occupations for it. However, this letter is not an Essay upon the Heart, however like one it may seem. Nor is it an Essay on Myself, for it was of Yourself I meant to write. I have a fatal tendency to generalise which makes me wander off in by-paths.

You know that I have always believed in your literary gift, and have been anxious—rather fussily anxious—that your taste for the Turf should not preponderate and spoil it. I suppose I may take all the privileges of an unmarried aunt-in-the-spirit and tell you frankly that I don't like your racing novels and I think them rather unworthy of you. Ever since you showed me those "Pleasures of a Sportsman"—

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those delicious little pictures of Nature and Sport, and of autumn mornings and evenings—so full of real simplicity, so accurate, and yet so alive and warm with imagination, I have felt that they represent the talent that you ought to cultivate. If one only considers happiness, of course one has nothing to do but cultivate the best that is in one. But to this you will reply, as you did the other day, that you have your living to make and that one's best "doesn't pay." It is here that I think I can step in and help you. My brother, not the one for whom I keep house, but the elder one, Geoffrey, has become partner in the firm of Smudge, Scrimgeour & Co., the well-known publishers. They want a Reader and have asked him to find one for them. As he does me the honour to believe in my judgment about books, he consulted me on the matter, and when I reminded him of you and showed him your "Pleasures of a Sportsman," he agreed that you might possibly fill the place. It means a nice and certain little salary—I am not yet sure how much. But I think it also means, if you go in for it, that you must

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give up "Girls and Goodwood," and stand forth unashamed of the poetic and literary gifts that are in you.

If you care for this idea, will you come and talk matters over with me on Wednesday? Don't be later than four, because a girl whom I have been asked to befriend is coming to tea. By the bye, she is by way of being literary; and as she is writing a novel, she will probably have designs on Geoffrey. Whatever happens to her name in the future, I cannot remember it now; but do stay on and meet her. I have not felt so keen for years as I do about your prospects. Some people say that the surest friendships are founded on likeness, some that they are founded on unlikeness. I don't believe in either theory much. The friend who interests one most is the person who is what one might have been, or, at least, what one wished to be; and the desire of my life was always to be a man of letters. Please try hard and do it for me—vicariously. But here I am again—giving way to my fatal habit.—Yours Martin-Tupperly, BARBARA MOORE.

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BACHELORS' CLUB,
January 9th.

DEAR MISS MOORE,—It is awfully kind of you to write as you do. Of course I know you were mother's greatest friend. She has often told me what a comfort you were all through my father's long illness and afterwards. And I don't forget how you used to come down with her to Harrow, and what good "spreads" we used to have at The Creameries. Do you remember the strawberry mashes, and salmon cutlets, and lemonade mixed with cream ices? One never seems to get that kind of food in London. I have a good mind to ask for it here, just for the sake of seeing the waiter's face.

I am sure I don't know why you should call yourself an old woman. One is old when one gets to be like poor Uncle Algy—always thinking about one's health, and money, and reading the *Economist*, and

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taking a gloomy view of life. In that way you are not old, and I trust to goodness that I never shall be either. But I think I'm rather old in other ways. Having no parents, no brothers and sisters, and no home makes one rather serious. One is bound to look ahead a bit—not like fellows who have got parents to settle everything for them.

All you tell me about literature is awfully interesting, as well as kind. But what you say about my taste for the Turf is a bit wide of the mark (if that isn't rude). I mean I really don't care a rap for the betting and roguery and humbug connected with the Turf; but I do love seeing a good horse, whether he's a racer or a hunter or a hack. If it comes to that, I prefer a good horse to a bad one even in a hansom. And, as I know a bit about horses (and nothing much about anything else), I naturally try to write about what I understand. Nature fits in naturally (is this tautology?) with Sport, and I love them both, and therefore can describe them both. But I should be all at sea in a love-story. The hero sees the heroine,

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and falls in love with her; and after great difficulties marries her, or is prevented and dies. That always seems to me to be *the* Love-Story, and I cannot conceive how fellows who write contrive to get so much variety out of it.

To tell you the truth, I was in hopes, when you began mentioning your brother and the publishers' firm that you thought they would take one of my stories and bring it out for me. That would have been ripping; but somehow I don't feel as if I should make much of a hand at reading other people's writings; but of course I should like the money if S. & S. thought me worth it; and I will come with pleasure on Wednesday and talk it over. You are a real good friend, and I am, yours as usual,

FRANK.

By the way, I had an awful wigging from Uncle Algy for signing "Frank." He said that nicknames were vulgar. I took the tip, and when I wrote back, signed "Francis Woodhouse Murray" all in full. Now

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he rounds on me for being pompous, and says he knows I mean to make "Woodhouse Murray" into a double-barrelled surname! Poor old chap! I believe he means all right, but it certainly is rather difficult to keep him sweet.

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CHAPTER XII

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CHAPTER XII

BACHELORS' CLUB,
January 19th.

DEAR MISS MOORE,—I called at your house to-day, and was very sorry to find that you had gone into the country, for I wanted to see you rather particularly. I am in a bit of a difficulty, and I know no one so likely to be able to help me out of it as you. I would rather have explained it *vivâ voce;* but as you are away, and as the maid did not know when you would be back again, I am obliged to write. It is rather a long story, but I hope you won't be bored.

Of course you remember that day when you asked me to come to tea with you, and talk over the Smudge & Scrimgeour business. (By the way, I never half thanked you for your good offices in that matter.)

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Well, you recollect that you told me to come early, because you had a literary girl coming to tea. I saw you were rather astonished when she and I shook hands like old friends, especially as I know so few people in London. I had no opportunity to explain at the time, and have been hoping to see you ever since. The history of my knowing the girl—I think it is more discreet in these matters not to mention names—is that this winter she is sharing a flat with my aunt, Mrs. George Woodhouse. I don't think you know my aunt. I don't wish to "crab" her, but she is not everybody's money, and my mother couldn't stand her at any price. Well, she has come to London for the winter, and asked me to go and see her. And there at tea I met the girl you know of. My aunt, in introducing us, said that the girl's father was an old friend of the family, and that she was Uncle Algy's god-daughter. This set her off at once, and she declared that this godfather-business made her and me a kind of cousins. And she went on about Uncle Algy, and how good and kind he was to her, and how he had helped to furnish

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the flat, and how she should like to see Feversham, of which she had heard so much, and a lot more. Presently she asked me what my profession was, and when I said that I wrote in a humble sort of way, she almost flung herself into my arms, declared there was nothing on earth she cared for so much as literature, and gasped, and rolled her eyes, and went on more like a poetess in a play than anything in real life. Thinking all this rather odd, I mentioned her in a letter to Uncle Algy, but he evidently rather "barred" the subject, and I came to the conclusion that I had better keep away from my aunt's flat so long as the girl was there. Little did I know what was in store for me. A few days after my visit to the flat, I got a letter in a most extraordinary hand, slanting backward, with all sorts of tails and branches. This was from the girl, following up our acquaintance, and enclosing a poem, and asking my opinion on it. Well, the only thing was to write back civilly, and say the best I could for the poem (which really is undiluted tosh, or seems so to my Philistine taste). That letter, though I assure

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you it was *only* civil—not the least bit *fond*—did all the mischief. She is always sending me bits of her prose and verse to criticise, and I get volumes from her by every other post telling me her "life-story." She says that she was wretched at home, that her family misunderstood her (which I am sure I don't wonder at), that she "burst the narrow cloister of convention, and went out into the large, bare world to follow her star wheresoever it led her."

As far as I can make out, it led her to Aunt Maude's flat, as the cheapest way of living, for they share the rent and housekeeping expenses. She doesn't exactly say so, but I fancy that is what she means; and then she goes on in the most extraordinary way, saying that her heart and mine beat in unison; that we both are meant to keep company with the Immortals; that life in clubs and flats, though more "emancipated" than home, is "drying" and "blighting" to the soul; and that true joy can only be found where "two twin-spirits wander hand in hand through the Eden of Pure Art."

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Now, dear Miss Moore, pray tell me what on earth I am to do. I never go within a mile of the flat, although they ask me to tea incessantly. I answer all these rigmaroles as shortly as ever I can. I only say the barest civilities about her poems. And yet she always writes back thanking me effusively for my "genius of sympathy," and says that my praise sends her to bed in "a rosy rapture." I assure you I live in terror of meeting her, and hardly dare look out of the window of this Club for fear she should be passing on a 'bus and should see me and rush in to ask my opinion of a sonnet. You can't conceive how oddly she dresses, and, if she dashed into the front hall here when the Club was pretty full, and attacked me before the other fellows, I believe I should have a seizure.

Pray, pray counsel me.—Your afflicted

FRANK.

P.S.—She has dedicated one of her sonnets "To the F. of my Alphabet." Do you think she means me?

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CHEYNE ROW,
Saturday.

MY DEAR FRANK,—I got your letter while I was staying with my friends at Dalcote, and I waited for the calm of Chelsea and my own house before I answered it. I am really very sorry for you, though not surprised. Ever since I saw that astonishing result of the times, Miss Elaine Thompson, nothing about her would surprise me. Terra-cotta jacket and all, she is like some strange, dingy, untidy orchid, and she ought to be kept in a specimen-glass, away from the community. I own that when I witnessed the exotic accolade of the hand with which she greeted you and realised that she already knew you, I was prepared for the worst. Her sort is, I believe, usually made in Germany—only there they are made simple. Miss Thompson has none of the naïveté of German sentiment. But do not, my dear Frank, I implore you, mistake her infatuation for a real *grande passion*. Passion is a rather grand and rather repellent faculty,

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about the merits of which I have never been able to make up my mind; perhaps there is no need to do so, for this nerveless and humorous generation seems inclined to do without it. There does not seem—does there?—any such enemy to passion as a sense of humour, which is, I suppose, first cousin to all the critical senses. But whether or no one likes the victims of passion, it is, at all events, a great quality, and therefore always respectable—though this sounds like something of a paradox, and I should have used the word respect-worthy. There's nothing, however, in the least worth considering about poor Miss Thompson's sentiment, and I don't feel that you owe it the chivalry due to a serious feeling. You are only her All and her Infinite, by which she means Herself in fancy-dress, and the sooner you check her, the better for both of you. I should get your Uncle Algernon, who you say is her godfather, to write to her and tell her the truth—that you do not return her admiration. I recall him in old days during your mother's lifetime, and my recollection of him makes me think

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he would be the right man for the situation. He is, if I remember rightly, a fastidious scholar, who understands the niceties of expression and uses few words, but those are impressive ones, and the densest lady would have no difficulty in understanding them. What is still more important is that he is an egoist—a most delicate egoist, entirely unruffled by the heart —and therefore likely to be clear-sighted about another egoist; clear-sighted, too, about *your* affairs, as he has no emotions to prejudice him. I can't imagine a surer counsellor in a disagreeable affair. You must forgive this frankness, for you know I always feel a little spiteful towards him because of his neglect of you. And as he once chose to become spiritually responsible for Miss Thompson and to ensure her hearing of sermons, he had better be at his post now—a task the easier for him as his responsibility is spiritual and not financial. I don't think that women are ever good judges of women; they either suffer from a quixotic tenderness about their own sex, or they become the severest and most unjudi-

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cial of judges from what they imagine to be principle, though more likely it is an uncomfortable inkling of the possibilities latent in every woman. So *I* won't give any verdict on your poor Muse. Only I suppose one need not count as a Pharisee if one rejoices at the drawbacks one is without. And as to the things one has, well, I can't help being glad that both you and I have a sense of humour. It is not the best thing on earth, but it really is one of the nicest, and though it is not the oil or the pepper, it is certainly the salt in the funny little old cruet-stand of this mortal existence. Now mind and write at once to your Uncle Algernon, and let me know what he says.—Ever yours affectionately, BARBARA MOORE.

The most charming moment of the day has arrived. The country post is going, tea is coming, and I am going to sit in my arm-chair with my feet on the fender and read the Maxims of La Bruyère—with my La Rochefoucauld not too far off. Do you know them well, those two past-masters in the art of existence? They cut pretty deep into life.

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CHAPTER XIII

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CHAPTER XIII

ABOUKIR MANSIONS,
February 6th, 1903.

DEAR FRIEND,—And yet it is as Publisher and not as Friend that I address you to-day. I hear that you have become Reader to Smudge, Scrimgeour & Co., and I venture to send you a specimen chapter of my Life-Work, "The Woof-Warp," a Realistico-Ideal Novel, in three volumes. It speaks for itself, and I need add no comment. I do not think that a real gift need fear to recognise its own force, or that it should trammel that force by self-distrust. False modesty is a sign of weakness. It is this conviction which now impels me to send you my MS., and to feel that your Firm will not be the loser by it. And since feeble Woman is not allowed to speak the truth, it has seemed

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to me that I could speak out more boldly on many essential facts if I assumed the name of a man. I have therefore called myself "Sintram Shand"—a *nom-de-plume* that none, I think, will see through; nor is there, I believe, any other sign in the book by which my Womanhood will be known. I can only congratulate myself on having such a Reader. Happier I than the Brontës! happy indeed to have no sojourning in the Desert of Non-Recognition! It is to you, therefore, that I turn, and in your arms that I lay the Child of my thought—the Child for whom I have laboured. I enclose a stamped envelope.—Yours in all amity, ELAINE T.

THE WOOF-WARP.

BY SINTRAM SHAND.

Volume I.

BOOK IV.—THE AFTERMATH.

CHAPTER LIX.

MODRED BORRE was standing in his study, motionless

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and upright, as his custom was when under the stress of deep emotion. He felt a fundamental need of relaxation, and, tossing back his mane of thick chestnut hair, as he always did when he was anxious to shake off a subject that had haunted him, he sat down to his writing-table. With a sigh of relief he turned to the London Water Companies Act which was lying before him. It had long been the favourite toy of his lighter moments—the moments, ever growing rarer, when he could chase from his mind the strenuous, the omnipresent, image of the Cowper-Temple Clause. A smile broke out over his face—like Spring-time—a smile which made him young again, and turned him into the same man who had wooed and won Vivien Holt ten years ago. How he had changed in those ten short, long years! How—but he must not thus allow himself to fall back into the Individual: was not the Individual dead in him, slain in a hundred hard battles with Vivien, with his Ego, with Custom, with the World—dead and lost in the Good of the Community? He turned back with decision to the

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London Water Companies Act, and ran his pen firmly through a sentence here and there: all must be in readiness for his interview with the Prime Minister on the morrow. He would go up to town by the 10.15 train, which got him to Waterloo at 11.30; he would take a hansom to Downing Street; this was a moment for which to sacrifice principle and to give up the Westminster omnibus—that omnibus which knew his well-bred figure so well. How clearly he could picture what would happen—the familiar room, the heavy, square figure of the Premier, his sarcastic voice, his rather inanimate face lighting up at the sight of Modred and the Water Companies Act. Oh, how sick he was of it all! He strode to the window, and throwing back his hair, grasped his coat-button, with that gesture so often observable in idealistic natures bent upon practical measures. Modred loved Nature, and the prospect that met his eye was fitted to soothe and arrest him. Before him rolled the blue ocean of Surrey. To the right, the eye caught the red roofs of Witmere village; to the left, was a clump of silvery

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poplars making a delicate lacework against the grey-blue sky. The round curves of Hind Head and the pine-wooded crest of Blackdown dominated the more distant landscape; while before him, on the lawn, the gorse-warbler sought his daily worm, and above, in the elm, the wryneck filled the air with his short, rasping cry. A young green caterpillar was slowly wending his way along the Cobaea Scandens which covered the loggia. He watched it in silence, a fine ironical smile upon his closed lips. "So slow, yet aiming so high," he said half unconsciously to himself,—"the creeper smothers it, like me. . . . And Vivien . . . but, ah! it was not thus ten years ago." With a strong step he walked to his bureau, unlocked a drawer, and took from it a small white vellum volume. "Ten long, short years ago," he repeated aloud. . . . It was the diary of the days of his courtship. Half tenderly he fingered the pages, and then let himself read wherever his eye fell. It lighted on these words:—

June 15*th*, 1896.—Decided to call on Miss Vivien

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Holt and bring her the Bluebooks I had promised. Took the whole set on Canadian Emigration. Reached Park Lane; noted that my heart beat more quickly than usual on the doorstep, but was not certain if this *was* from my heart or from pure intellectual excitement. Found Miss Holt at her table, writing out her scheme for the Inebriate Ladies' Laundry. Talked to her on the Inebriate Question (about which I know much) for an hour. Absorbing but imprudent subject. We grew more intimate, and ended with Co-operation and Socialism, Vivien looking almost beautiful in her black satin, with the single diamond star at her throat. She spoke nobly of the unequal distribution of wealth. Felt much less uncertain of myself. *Is this Passion?*

July 1*st*.—Prostrate in soul and body after an exhausting week of wrestling with myself about the Income Tax. What is the right attitude towards it? Alas! I no longer know. Doubt blurs my vision, the old foundations have crumbled, and the certainty of Youth has fled. Resolved to find intellectual calm in

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Vivien's presence. It is wonderful how reposeful it is to talk about oneself. And no one but a woman will listen. It is her supreme Charm. I am beginning to understand Love. Debated within myself as to the hour at which I am at my best. Decided on a quarter to three.

July 2nd.—Have resolved on marriage—may I not rather call it Co-operative Union?—with Vivien. She is made for me—noble woman that she is. She is giving up all the pleasures of her existence, even her Inebriate Ladies' Laundry, for my sake, and we are going to live a life of hard work together in Park Lane.

Modred put the book down with an air of indefinable sadness. Where were they now, those golden days, when he and she had common topics of conversation? Half unconsciously he put up his hand and caught at a wasp which was buzzing above his head; then, shaking back his hair, he let his hand fall again. His eye caught the row of pamphlets upon the Game Laws

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on the shelf opposite him—the laws he had so profoundly studied. Could not every man in some way enter his protest against them? True, no one could preserve wasps; but was not even the sparing of a wasp in some sort a working out of his Ideal? For a wasp—— But here the door creaked slowly, and Vivien languidly came in. Her clothes rustled as she moved. She was dressed in black chiffon, with touches of yellow here and there, and she wore a sharp aigrette in her little feather toque. There was about Vivien that inexplicable air of aristocracy which has such a potent charm for every one who encounters it, even for the Socialist. As he looked at her, Modred realised that it really had been this which had first attracted him to her, though he had called it by other names. The old spell returned and held him anew. "Dearest," he began—but she broke in at once. "I am going up to town by the eleven," she said. He looked long at her. "You are always going up by the eleven," he replied, in a low voice from which all passion had disappeared. "I must go to Woolland's

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Sale," was all her answer, and she made again for the door. "Dear," he said, "to-morrow I am to see the Premier. I sorely need strengthening. Could you not stay with me? I think perhaps that if you played me the Fire Music from 'The Valkyrie' I could get the Cowper-Temple Clause out of my head. At present it never leaves me, night or day." "I am very sorry, but I must go to Woolland's Sale," she reiterated, in her even, metallic tones; "I shall come back by the 5.45." The door creaked slowly, and she rustled away from him.

. . . For a moment he sat as one stunned. Then, half mechanically, he took down his hat from the chamois-horn above his head, put his John Stuart Mill in his pocket, and left the house. Like a man in a dream, he crossed the dusty road to the red-brick villa opposite; like a man in a dream, he rang the door-bell. The parlour-maid answered it. "Is Miss Alice at home?" he asked. "Miss Alice is in the summer-arbour a-readin' of Ibsen," the

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servant guardedly rejoined. Modred's heart beat so loud that he could hear it. Blessed servant to be so easily duped by him and to think it was Miss Alice he needed! He thought she must perceive the tremble in his voice as he added carelessly, "And Fräulein Schleiermacher, is she with Miss Alice?" "If it's the German governess you mean, she's in the arbour too," was the reply. . . .

Still like one in a dream, Modred passed through the garden-door to the Path which led to the Arbour. It was almost Noon.

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CHAPTER XIV

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CHAPTER XIV

Bute Street, W.,
February 8th.

DEAR UNCLE ALGERNON,—I have never written to you before, but I have often talked of you. Mamma has always taught us that you are the guardian angel of our family. You know that guardian angels have wings, and the reason which now emboldens me to write is that I want you to take *us* under them. *Us* means George and me—and George is Dr. Chubb, your aunt's resident physician, to whom I have to-day become engaged. We love each other passionately, and nothing will ever alter our resolution to marry. My mother will, I know, be delighted; I think our union has for the last fortnight been the wish of her heart. But your Aunt Louisa will not see things in this light at all. The fact is that she will probably be very angry with us and we dare not ourselves tell her the news. But, knowing your fatherly kindness,

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I turn to you in our need. You are the one person for whose opinion Lady Louisa has any respect, and I think I may say that your influence over her is unbounded. If you told her that we were engaged and that you countenanced the arrangement, I believe that she might be softened. The truth is that she is in love with George herself and has done her best to separate us. But we are made for one another, and if you saw us together I know you would agree. Like all great men—and the world will still ring with the name of Chubb—George is mercurial and has gloomy fits; I, on the contrary, am very bright (George calls me "Sonsy" and "his Sunbeam"); I am quite prepared to flood his life with sunshine and to be very economical too. Of course, lately, his main income has been derived from Lady Louisa, who has given him a large salary; but he has saved enough to buy a practice, and I could do with very little, and even make his clothes. Nothing would matter as long as we had one big room for his patients' waiting-room, and I'm sure you will agree with me that Love is *the* only thing

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that is at all really important. The worst of it is that Lady Louisa still owes him his quarter's salary, and we are afraid that if she is agitated by our engagement she will not give it him. Please, please, dear Uncle Algernon, act the good fairy, as you must often have done before, and break the news to her and put her into a good temper again. I wonder if you know that one of the best ways of doing so is to tell her she seems very frail and to make her talk about her symptoms. She especially loves being told that she looks faint. But no doubt you know this already. Do *please*, we implore you, manage this tiny little job for us, and George and I will bless you for ever. He wishes me to say that he already feels quite like your nephew and may he send you his love? Could you write to Lady L. as soon as possible, as George and I feel very overstrained by the situation?—With a fond embrace, your loving niece,

LILIAN WOODHOUSE.

George belongs to the Rutlandshire Chubbs, not to the Chubbs of Wolverhampton, *who are no relations*.

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THE HALL, FEVERSHAM-SUR-STRAND,
February 9th, 1903.

DEAR LILIAN,—I have received by to-day's second post your letter of yesterday's date. You justly observe that you have never before written to me, and I must frankly say that I hope you will never again send me a letter so deficient in good sense and good feeling. As the head of your family, and as being, in some sort, responsible for you, I feel bound to set before you, in the clearest possible light, the culpability of your present conduct.

You entered Lady Louisa's house on the sole strength of *my* recommendation. Of course, I do not forget that you are Lady Louisa's great-niece; but you know very well that she renounced all communication with your father after his marriage (of which she highly disapproved), and would never see your mother. As to yourself, I doubt if she ever realised your existence until I mentioned your name. Your

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father's habitual improvidence and premature death left you, with your mother and sisters, in a state of genteel destitution; and I, yielding, perhaps weakly, to your mother's passionate appeals for help, recommended you as Companion to my aunt. I knew, of course, that you had no accomplishments which would command a salary, but I thought there might be ways in which a well-disposed girl, even though completely uneducated, could make herself useful to an aged lady in delicate health. My aunt adopted my suggestion—not, I must admit, without reluctance—and consented to receive you on the footing, as I understand,—for there is no good in mincing these matters,—of an unpaid Upper Servant. This arrangement at least provided you with a refined home and congenial occupation; and you are now mad enough and ungrateful enough to talk of deserting my aunt, at her advanced age and with her increasing infirmities, and that in circumstances essentially discreditable to yourself and all concerned.

As a man of honour, I must communicate your

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intentions to my aunt, and then leave the matter in her hands.

It is, I fear, only *in a sense* that I can sign myself your affectionate uncle,

ALGERNON WENTWORTH-WOODHOUSE.

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THE HALL, FEVERSHAM-SUR-STRAND,
February 9th, 1903.

MY DEAR AUNT,—There are those who, when they are compelled to announce unpleasant news, attempt, as they say, to "break" it. This I have always regarded as a form of moral cowardice, and I therefore inform you, without further circumlocution, that my niece, whom you so obligingly took as your Companion, has formed a clandestine engagement with your resident doctor. She actually had the effrontery to make me privy to her misdeeds—with what result you can imagine. I rejoice in the reflection that your well-known strength of character will enable you to deal with this domestic treachery as it deserves.—Affectionately yours,

ALGERNON WENTWORTH-WOODHOUSE.

P.S.—I write in haste, as I am just leaving for London.

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CHAPTER XV

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CHAPTER XV

100 Portland Place, W.,
February 10th, 1903.

DEAR MISS THOMPSON,—As an old friend of your father's and as one of your sponsors, I could have wished to address you by your Christian name. But I fear that the substance of my letter must be such as would make an affectionate or familiar commencement wholly inappropriate. At the same time, I feel that the relations previously subsisting between us not only authorise, but compel, me to express myself in language of unwonted plainness.

It has lately come to my knowledge that my sister-in-law, Mrs. George Woodhouse, has had the extreme unwisdom (I might use a stronger phrase, but I forbear) to make you acquainted with my nephew, Francis Murray. There is much in the youth's

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character and conduct which has long caused me uneasiness, and not seldom displeasure; but up till now I have never detected him in positive deviation from truth.

This circumstance leads me to fear that there may be more than boyish coxcombry in his clear and reiterated statement that you pursue him with unwelcome attentions, and apparently have in view nothing less preposterous than an engagement. In order that I might satisfy myself as to the precise amount of culpability attaching to your conduct, I told my nephew that I wished to see the letters which he had received from you. A more natural or more legitimate desire could not be conceived; but my nephew refused to send them. He justifies his refusal on the ground of what he absurdly calls "chivalry," but what I should rather characterise as vanity and self-will. An affectation of superior knowledge of the world may often be detected in the young.

Failing the production of the incriminating documents, you will see that I am constrained to believe

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the worst. In the absence of proof to the contrary, I must believe that you have inveigled an extremely foolish youth, by many years your junior, and have tried to entrap him into an offer of marriage.

If I am right in this deplorable surmise, it is obvious that all appeals to good feeling, delicacy, gratitude, and the like, would be thrown away. It may better suit my purpose if I tell you quite explicitly the position of affairs. My nephew is a youth against whose moral character indeed I can make no positive allegation, but who has certainly never shown any signs of high principle or delicate feeling. His means are so small that he may, without serious exaggeration, be described as penniless. He has (in my judgment) no intellectual gifts. He is conceited, idle, and extravagant. Having no prospects at the Bar, I believe that he has just now some temporary occupation in a house of business. Whether, under these circumstances, he would be an eligible partner for life is a question on which I pronounce no opinion. I should recommend you to consult your parents. I have

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heard that they spoilt you a good deal; but there must, I conceive, be limits to even their forbearance.

One word remains to be said. You may perhaps imagine that my nephew has what are vulgarly called "expectations" from me. Pray disabuse your mind of this delusion. What my testamentary dispositions may be is a matter in which I do not court publicity. But you may rest assured that my nephew's refusal to disclose the documents which I demanded will have effectually disposed of any schemes for his advancement which I may, or may not, have entertained.—Faithfully yours,

ALGERNON WENTWORTH-WOODHOUSE.

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ABOUKIR MANSIONS, WEST KENSINGTON,
February 11th.

MY DEAR FRIEND,—(for you will, I know, allow me to call you by this sacred name),—I have many things to thank you for, but most of all do I bless you for your letter. Believe me, I can appreciate the effort it must have cost you to write it—the victory of friendship, the sacrifice of your own wishes, that it means. I treasure its nobility, its frankness, its austerity even. Had every word of it been true, I should but have bowed my head—young head though it be—in reverent gratitude. But, dearest and best of friends, you are mistaken—generously but utterly mistaken. I have liked your nephew as a younger, a much younger brother, but I have never dreamed of any warmer feeling for him. My heart has never bounded at his approach, or my pulse beat the quicklier for him by one throb. He is not old enough to interest me. He has had no experience, no mellow-

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ing storm-showers to ripen the grapes of his spirit. His character presents no contrasts—nothing to lay hold of a keen advancing intellect such as I cannot help knowing I possess. "Youth's not life's crown, tho' youth is well," as I once said in my little poem, "Youth and Heart" (which will appear with my other "Versicles of a Lonely Soul").

And yet, and yet, I know what Passion is. I make no denial that the June of my Life has come to me, even unto me also. I love, and I love deeply, and I dare hope I am at least something to him whom I have chosen. Shall I describe him to you, and can you guess who he may be? He is not young; he is not really old, though winter has laid a dignifying finger upon him. Wisdom is his, and Truth, and a Mind whose largeness never relapses into laxity. He has something better than good looks, he has a presence. He is rich, but he lives as one that is poor; he has dwelling-places large enough to hold the throngs of fashion, but he dares to live in solitude. He is weak and ill, and he has no woman to tend him. And yet

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there is one Woman whose life he has completed; whose intellectual strength depends upon him; who is the better and the nobler for his existence; one who would fain hold him by the hand and smooth his pillow and talk to him of all things in heaven and on earth. She is young, but she will give him her youth; she is gifted, but she will give him her mind; she is not what men call beautiful, but the *meaning* of her face is his—and she asks no reward but to serve him, and him only, until the Twilight.

I will say no more, but it may be that you can guess, too, who *she* is.—Your godchild,

ELAINE.

May I add this little song which came to me last night? It is very quiet:—

He dwells amidst untrodden ways,
Near Wisdom's treasure-trove:
A King, who findeth none to praise
And very few to love.

I took my heart inside my hand—
I laid it at his feet;
My King came down in Robe and Crown—
The rest was passing sweet.

E. T.

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CHAPTER XVI

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CHAPTER XVI

Telegrams

To Woodhouse, 100 Portland Place, W.

ARRIVE Portland Place this afternoon with husband for kind advice. Married: Registrar: to-day. All perfection.—Lilian.

To Woodhouse, 100 Portland Place, W.

Coming two to-day to consult you; urgent business. Will explain personally. Billion apologies.—Maude.

[Sent 12.10 p.m.]
To Woodhouse, 100 Portland Place, W.

Come Bute Street five to-day. Discuss disagreeable affair. Instant measures necessary. Solitude ensured. Girl sent for day to Clapham. Shock affects health.—Fitzwigan.

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[Sent 12.45 p.m.]
To WOODHOUSE, 100 Portland Place, W.

Mysterious disappearance of Dr. Chubb when summoned by me. Cardiac Spasm. Worst suspicions. What course advisable?—FITZWIGAN.

To LILIAN CHUBB, c/o LADY LOUISA FITZWIGAN, Bute Street, W.

Your conduct incredible folly, and proposed visit gross impertinence. Not at home.—WOODHOUSE.

To MRS. G. WOODHOUSE, Aboukir Mansions, W.

On no account come to-day. Closely occupied.—ALGERNON.

To FITZWIGAN, Bute Street, W.

Impossible come to you, but could see you here. Absconding couple threaten to force entry.—WOODHOUSE.

To MURRAY, Bachelors' Club, W.

Come here at once. Might be useful. Disagreeable business.—WOODHOUSE.

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CHEYNE ROW,
Tuesday Evening.

DEAR FRANK,—For goodness sake, write at once to tell me what happened at Portland Place to-day after my departure and your arrival. I longed that my eyes might telegraph to you what had been going on, but your uncle was so firm in bowing me out that I had no choice but to leave. My dear Frank, the whole affair was awful! Another such experience would, I believe, paralyse me, and I feel that I must lose no time in describing it to you, though probably you have by now had many versions of what occurred.

And, first, you must know what took me to your uncle's house. After your visit to me yesterday, I found a good deal to think over. Knowing that you have a little income of your own, it has always been a matter of surprise to me that money-making seemed of such importance to you, who are the least mercenary of men; and when you revealed to me that you have

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been substantially helping old Mrs. Stone for the last three years, my blood boiled. She is no more than your third cousin, and not only is she a generation nearer to your uncle, but a great part of their childhood was, I know, spent together, so that he has all the added ties of his oldest associations to bind him to her. Yet it would seem that he has never given her a farthing. At midnight, when all one's boldest plans are conceived, and the impossible becomes more possible than it really is, I resolved to go to Mr. Woodhouse, tell him the truth, and make him take this burden from your shoulders. Though a little less sanguine this morning, I did not allow myself to waver, and in order to make sure of finding him in and alone (I remembered that he always lunched at home and rested afterwards), I got to Portland Place a little past two. I felt rather surprised when the servant told me that he was out—that he had received several telegrams about luncheon-time, seemed very much disturbed, and had gone to the telegraph office to answer them himself. The butler had evidently

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had a bad time and was relieved to have a confidante, but looked scared when I said that I would wait till Mr. Woodhouse returned. I had not been five minutes in the drawing-room when the door burst open, and that very objectionable lady, Mrs. George Woodhouse, burst in. The poor creature always would have taken a double-first for bad breeding, and under emotion she is, of course, bound to distinguish herself. She seemed profoundly agitated and hardly waited to see who I was before she told me why she was in such a state. Her daughter Lilian, Lady Louisa's companion, had become secretly engaged, she said, to the resident physician, Dr. Chubb. What on earth should she, the unhappy mother, do, and how should she break it to Algernon? She had telegraphed to him that she was coming. Her manner was the drollest mixture of panic and triumph; but she had hardly begun to tell me about Dr. Chubb's income and prospects, when the door again opened impetuously, and there entered a rather elegant, second-rate young woman and a very inelegant, second-rate young

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man—Lilian and Dr. Chubb. They lost no time in informing their mamma that they had just been married before the Registrar, and had resolved to implore Mr. Woodhouse's protection against his aunt. I must say that I never saw anybody more miserable than Mrs. Woodhouse. Like all the feeble and foolish, she began to scold. "You have ruined your chances altogether," she said, in her loud, shrill tones; "you know what an unmitigated skinflint your uncle is." "I do know that he is the most disagreeable old gentleman in the world," Lilian replied, in just the same voice as her mother's—"You have always impressed upon me that there wasn't a soul that could love him; and Lady Louisa says that she positively detests him, and that he pretends to be delicate so that he may have more leisure for selfishness; but all the same——" At this moment I heard the faintest footfall outside; then the door, which Lilian and Dr. Chubb had left open, creaked slowly, and—oh, heavens!—Mr. Woodhouse was in our midst. *I saw at once that he had heard the whole conversation.* My dear Frank, I

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never beheld anything more awful than his face. It was absolutely livid, his lips were blue, and he had the cruelty to stand still for several seconds, saying nothing and looking everything. It was clear that he was not even aware of my presence. He was just opening his lips, and I own that I was turning cold with terror, when a violent ring at the front door bell distracted his attention; there was a panting and rustling on the staircase, and before you could say Jack Robinson, old Lady Louisa—*Lady Louisa*, who, as you know, has not walked for fifteen years—literally *ran* into the room. No italics are sufficient for the situation, and even Mr. Woodhouse was petrified. She was breathless with exertion and anger, and seemed to be endowed with superhuman strength. The sight of Lilian and Dr. Chubb finished her, or, to be more accurate, set her off; but as her first words rang through the room, your uncle unfortunately became conscious of my presence. I really don't quite know what happened; I only remember that I stuttered forth some attempt at an explanation and found my-

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self, I shall never know how, being bowed inexorably downstairs by Mr. Woodhouse. This is why you saw him opening the door for me as you came in, and you will now understand my scared appearance and flustered exit. Of course, it was impossible for you and me to do more than greet each other at such a juncture, but I longed to give you a word of warning before you entered that den of egoists—and also to entreat you for an account of what came next. The thought of "Aunt Louisa" really occupies me most. How will she ever get on to her sofa again? And I confess that your uncle's cold *fishy* eye follows me wherever I look. Well, as usual, I have done nothing for you and have put my foot into it. Whatever "it" may mean, my foot seems always to be there; but though that fact is inconvenient, I confess it provides me with a good deal of drama and adds a spicy flavour to life.

And if one tires of being a dramatist and wants to turn moralist, what a sheaf of axioms might be gleaned from to-day's show of egoists! "Quelque découverte

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qu'on ait faite dans le pays de l'égoïsme, il y reste encore bien des terres inconnues." Is not that maxim of La Rochefoucauld's (and I've only changed it by substituting *égoïsme* for *amour-propre*) a charming summary of this morning's impressions? Do write without delay to your affectionate friend,

BARBARA MOORE.

I gather, from what happened, that none of your uncle's answering telegrams could have reached their destinations in time, as they must surely have been preventive? Lilian let out that she and Dr. Chubb had telegraphed that they were coming to Portland Place, and as "Aunt Louisa" held a pink paper in her upraised hand, I suppose she had opened Mr. Woodhouse's reply. If you can, satisfy my curiosity on these points.

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CHAPTER XVII

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CHAPTER XVII

BACHELORS' CLUB,
Wednesday.

DEAR MISS MOORE,—Yes, indeed! there's a heap to tell you. If only I could work it into a book, my fortune would be made. But I must begin at the beginning.

You know I went down to Feversham just before Christmas, in order to talk over my affairs with Uncle A. He was not exactly what you would call gushing, but he behaved very decently to me, and gave me a day's hunting. I fancied, somehow, that he was rather more inclined to thaw than I had ever known him before, and that he was beginning, in his queer way, to take some interest in my career. If it hadn't been for this, I couldn't have hardened my heart to write and tell him about E. T. and her goings-on,

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as you recommended me to do. However, I did it, and got the most frightful answer from him, demanding, among other things, to see her letters, in order that he might tell her father, and cut her out of his own will (which, by the way, I don't believe she ever was in). Well, of course, I wasn't going to give the girl away to save my own skin, even though she had behaved like a lunatic. So I wrote and refused to send the letters; whereupon the old boy rounded upon me for my "insolent refusal to comply with his wishes," and wrote his usual rigmarole about "casting off" and "renouncing communications"—which, as he hates seeing anyone, is easy enough for him to do; and full of mysterious hints about his will, which he seems to be altering from day to day, and uses as a weapon to terrorise all his belongings.

Well, I felt inclined to tell him to go and be blowed, but I altered it into something about "respect for his prejudices," etc., and let the matter drop. Really, I imagined that I had seen the last of him for ever. You may therefore guess how surprised I was when at

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luncheon-time yesterday I got a wire from him, asking me to come to Portland Place at once, to help him in some "disagreeable business." This seemed to give promise of a good "rag," though I couldn't imagine what it was about; so off I posted to P. P., and I wouldn't have missed it for all the money in the Bank.

As soon as Uncle Algy had shut the door on you, he turned to me and said, rather grimly, that though Barnes (his butler) was a man of considerable sagacity, and of tact above his station, still there sometimes were contingencies in family life where it was better to employ a relation than a servant, and that therefore he had sent for me.

This was characteristic, wasn't it? But, of course, I said I should be only too glad if I could help him; and up we went to the drawing-room. The scene which there awaited us was more like one of Mrs. John Wood's plays than anything in real life. Lady Louisa was lying back in a large arm-chair, purple in the face, and puffing fearfully, but still talking nineteen to the dozen and at the top of her voice.

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Aunt Maude flung her arms round my neck, declaring that I had always been the dearest of nephews, and had now come to help her through the crisis of her life. On the sofa lay a prostrate female form, with its face buried in the cushions, and one foot in the air kicking convulsively. That foot I instantly recognised. It was Lilian's, and it really is not a foot, but a good eighteen inches. On the hearthrug stood a fellow in a fur coat, a red tie, and a *white waistcoat*—an unspeakable bounder to look at, but so evidently feeling himself a fool that my heart relented towards him. And, in the midst of all this clamjamfry, Uncle Algy, rigid and livid with inarticulate rage. I was just wondering what in the world he wanted me to do—whether to cut Lady Louisa's stays, or assault the gent in the fur coat, or what—when in came Barnes, bearing an immense bunch of daffodils with a card tied to it. Barnes behaved with admirable composure, didn't take the slightest notice of the riot all round him, but said that a young lady had called to see Uncle Algy, and, on

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being told that he was particularly engaged, had left the flowers, and had said that they were to be given to him immediately. By this time Uncle A. was literally speechless, so he motioned to me to take the flowers and read the card. Guess what was on it! "To my Alpha and Omega—E. T." I knew the writing only too well. It was Elaine Thompson's. The rapture of catching Uncle Algy in a flirtation was too much for my prudence, and I said, after reading the inscription aloud, "What a very affectionate god-daughter!" This brought things to a crisis. Uncle Algy seemed to recover his self-possession in a moment. He quietly put the poor daffodils in the fire, and said to Aunt Maude, "You seem equally unfortunate in your daughter and in your *protégée*." He then addressed himself to Lady Louisa. "My dear aunt," he said, "the activity and energy which you have displayed to-day—and are still displaying, for I have a difficulty in hearing myself speak—confirm the opinion which I have often expressed that your ill-health is imaginary. No one except a very strong

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woman could move so quickly directly after luncheon, or talk so loud. It is evident that you have no need of Dr. Chubb's further services. With respect to your former Companion, whom, I presume, we must now call Mrs. Chubb, it is hardly necessary to observe that I have seen her to-day for the last time. As to the confusion and distress evinced by Mrs. George Woodhouse, I can only say that they are well deserved. She will remember that I warned her of what was certain to happen if she persisted in bringing her daughters to London. She will, of course, retire immediately to Wales, and will not, I trust, forget to return those articles of furniture which I lent her earlier in the winter. I could have wished to convert the *loans* into *gifts*, but, under existing circumstances, that is, of course, impossible."

Then turning to me, the old boy said, "Francis, I must request you to escort Lady Louisa back to Bute Street. Should it come to my knowledge that you have gossiped at your Club about what you have seen here to-day, or have attempted to be facetious at the

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expense of your family, I shall be very seriously displeased. Ring the bell. Barnes, a four-wheeled cab for her Ladyship."

I have no time for more.—Ever yours,

FRANK.

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CHAPTER XVIII

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CHAPTER XVIII

100 PORTLAND PLACE, W.,
March 1st, 1903.

MY DEAR THOMPSON,—We do not meet as often as I could wish; but I can assure you that the infrequency of communication between us has not been due to any diminution of the sincere regard in which, ever since Oxford days, I have held you. My late wife had little or no genius for Society, and during her lifetime we confined our dinner-list to those whom, on account of hospitalities received from them, we in turn were bound to entertain. The phrase "Cutlet for Cutlet," although, as being slang, it is abhorrent to my taste, still seems to express, with a certain picturesque vigour, the duties of hospitality. The *pleasures* of hospitality, which some people profess to

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feel, I have always regarded as pure affectation. Since my wife's death, my own impaired health has compelled me to live principally in the country, and, when I am, as now, in Portland Place, I always feel that there would be no true kindness in asking people to visit a house where there is so little to excite or attract.

It has thus come about that I have seen practically nothing of you or your family for several years, and I was proportionately surprised when, early last autumn, I received a letter from your daughter Ellen, claiming my sympathy and help on the ground that she was my god-daughter. Insensibility to the cry of distress has never, I trust, been one of my characteristics; and as (forgive my plainness of speech) your daughter seemed to have an unhappy and uncomfortable home, I readily responded to her request for friendly advice. If I remember aright, I sent a greeting to you and Mrs. Thompson through her; and I have no doubt that you are conversant with the correspondence, and with all that grew out of it.

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It appears that, while your daughter was living with my sister-in-law, Mrs. George Woodhouse, she became acquainted with my nephew, Francis Murray; and, unless I am greatly misinformed, she so forgot what was due to her sex—I say nothing about her godfather—as to make overtures to that extremely uninteresting youth. Distressed by her importunities, and conscious of his own total inability to support a wife, young Murray related all the circumstances to an elderly female friend of his, and, by her advice, to me. So far, I cannot complain of his conduct; but, on my requesting to see your daughter's letters, he abruptly, and even insolently, refused to give them up. Under these circumstances, nothing remained but for me to tell your daughter as plainly as I could what I thought of her conduct, and to renounce all further communication with her.

This being the case, you can easily judge of my amazement when I learned, through a concatenation of circumstances too long to narrate, but too clear to be misunderstood, that your misguided, and—alas! that

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I should have to say it—your abandoned, daughter had conceived the insane design of marrying Me.

My health is not what it once was, and my nerves have been sorely tried by the thoughtlessness and exactions of my relations; and this shock induced a crisis, partly cardiac and partly cerebral, which occasioned the most serious anxiety to my medical attendant. To preserve myself against any possible repetition of a scene which had nearly destroyed me was an immediate and imperative duty. I have therefore taken what seemed to me the only effective measure, and have made an offer of marriage to a young lady whom for some months I have employed for massage and manicure. Her name is Miss Evelyn Skettles. She seems healthy, and of a cheerful disposition. Having been married before, I am quite aware of the risks attendant on such a step; but a wise man from whom, in early youth, I learned much of the philosophy of life, was accustomed to observe, "All wives despise their husbands, but they can be

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made to obey; and when this point is secured, the other does not signify."

You will, if you think fit, announce my intention to your daughter; and pray believe me, dear Thompson, sincerely yours,

ALGERNON WENTWORTH-WOODHOUSE.

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100 PORTLAND PLACE, W.,
March 1st, 1903.

MY DEAR AUNT,—If I remember aright, one day when you came, uninvited, to luncheon, you met Miss Evelyn Skettles. When you next see her, she will be Mrs. Wentworth-Woodhouse. She is exceedingly well connected, the head of her family being Sir Barnet Skettles, a baronet of George the Third's creation. Miss Skettles has been well brought up; thoroughly understands illness; and is full of tact and sympathy —qualities which, I may observe, I have not found abundant among my relations on either side.—Your affectionate nephew, A. W.-W.

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100 PORTLAND PLACE, W.,
March 1st, 1903.

DEAR MAUDE,—After what has recently passed between us, I feel that I am stretching courtesy far beyond its natural, and almost beyond its justifiable, limit, when I write to tell you of my engagement to Miss Evelyn Skettles. This young lady has, by her cheerfulness, dexterity, and good feeling, contrived to make herself indispensable to me, and I feel confident that she will comport herself admirably as Mrs. Wentworth-Woodhouse, and mistress of Feversham Hall.—Yours affectionately,

ALGERNON.

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CHAPTER XIX

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CHAPTER XIX

IN FAREWELL TO THE MIGHT-HAVE-BEEN.

(On hearing of a Friend's Engagement.)

In a drear-nighted December—
  Unhappy, happy Me—
I sit and I remember
  Beneath my Ilex tree;
And Passion's dying ember
  Leaps up and glows for Thee

This bough, this stark dead member,
  In Spring with buds is set,
And thus in bleak December
  My tree is living yet.
So, if thou wilt, remember—
  And, if thou canst, forget.

MAY I send you this versicle, with the deepest hopes, the deepest faith, may I add the deepest *love* of a lifetime? And yet I would fain add one line—and then let us for ever be silent. You know that Mrs. George

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Woodhouse and I are parting from one another. And I am going home. Long, arduous, has been the struggle between Art and Duty—not the conventional duty towards Parents, the duty of the Decalogue—but the Higher Duty of raising the moral, the intellectual tone of my poor hearthstone. It—the moral tone, I mean—has sadly gone down since I left my father's roof. It is impossible not to own it; and it was last week, when I found my parents and my sisters actually playing (dare I tell you?) at *Ping-Pong*, that at last I measured the real issues of my absence. I will return there, with my Life-Work. For "The Woof-Warp," like all lasting things, has not yet found a publisher; it came back, I am proud to say, from Smudge & Scrimgeour on the very day that I visited my family. Had it been accepted, the compliment would have been a poor one. Truth cannot so soon find a harbour. But it is expensive to wait. The cost of daily existence demands vulgar success, and certain comforts are essential to refined and highly strung natures. Courage is needed to own this, but courage

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is the law of my being. So I will face the Rut manfully, and go back with patient endurance. I will lift those that are mine; I will watch that they do not lapse. I will sit once more in the old drawing-room, alone, yet not alone, for my Versicles and my Spirit will be with me, and I will bear my burden, as I have always borne it, with none to help me. My heart has been pierced by Life. That heart may be heavy, but it is rich—rich in experience and in a kind of bitter wisdom. I will sit still till the Twilight; I will write till the darkness falls. But the darkness is full of stars, and my home shall be lighted by Poetry—*my* Poetry. Think of me; teach *her*, your Wife, to think of me—of

ELAINE.

You may be glad to hear that the new weekly paper "Snippets" has accepted a little poem of mine. They talk of "merely nominal payment," but I care little for that. It will be in print, and I shall have served Art.

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BUTE STREET,
Thursday.

DEAR ALGERNON,—I cannot hide from you that it is an effort to me to write, after your false, *brutal*, and *unpardonable* words about my health. But, though you seem to forget the fact, you are still my nephew and I am unfortunately your aunt—and therefore I resume my pen to tell you of my disgust and amazement at the news of your engagement. That a plain, elderly egoist like yourself, with no personal charms, should think of marriage is to me revolting; but that, hale as you are, your choice should fall on a *masseuse*, fills me with positive *dismay*. I could not have believed that your hysteria (for such has always been the *true* name of your absurd complaint) could have so far deteriorated you as to make you seek for a wife who could minister to it. Such a woman is no better than a Pagan Slave, and is evidently taking you because of the one attraction you

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can offer—your wealth. I, for one, refuse to receive either of you in my house. The gentle exercise that has now, by the goodness of Providence, become once more possible to me, is *all-important;* and, as the slightest shock to my *very* exceptional Nervous System may again destroy my powers of moving, it is essential that I should live in *perfect calm.*

I hope that no one may be so demented as to give you a wedding-present. It would make you too ridiculous. Your first wife may have been a poor creature, but, at any rate, she was a *lady.*

For the sake of Christianity, I will still sign myself your affectionate aunt,

LOUISA FITZWIGAN.

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ABOUKIR MANSIONS,
Thursday Morning.

DEAR ALGERNON,—Harsh though you have been to me and mine, I feel that I must write on hearing the news of your engagement. I own that *it amazed me*. At your age, and after all the condemnation I have heard you lavish upon unequal matches and the women who accepted men for money, it is certainly strange to find you about to marry such an one yourself. I, at all events, was not a Masseuse, but a Quintilian, when I married George, and he was more than a quarter of a century younger than you when he married me. You can really have very little to say about the Chubbs after this, and I may as well take the opportunity of telling you that I intend living with them for the next few years at Surbiton. I have been made Fashion Correspondent to "Snippets," the new and very smart weekly, and I shall come up to town at least once a week to glean information. The Editor

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is a personal friend of my own and of Miss Thompson's. She (Ellen) will doubtless let you know about her future plans.

I wish you and the lady you have chosen all the happiness which you expect. My knowledge of you leads me to suppose that she will continue her professional career; I hear it is a very lucrative one.—Yours affectionately,

MAUDE Q. WOODHOUSE.

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CHAPTER XX

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CHAPTER XX

CHEYNE ROW,
Friday.

DEAR FRANK,—Have you seen the splendid review of your "Pleasures of a Sportsman" in the *Times* to-day? I feel sure that you are a made man, and I hear on all hands that the book is having the artistic success that it deserves, besides the popular financial one. Smudge & Scrimgeour will not easily let hold of you now! Dear Frank, I am so thankful that success has come to you. For some people one is peevish enough to regret it; it either poisons their opinion of themselves or incites them to produce tons of seventh-rate art, adding largely to the wilderness of bad taste which now hems us in on every side. But for you, success is a kind of music—march-music, which urges

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you to a quicker and happier pace. I believe in good things (and bad things) coming all at once, and so I was not in the least surprised when, just after reading the review of your book, I heard of the death of old Mrs. Stone. So now your purse is free again; and, in consequence, I am going to be very bold. Allow me to tell you there is no earthly reason now why you should not marry, and every reason why you should. Do not believe that it is that much-discussed topic, your uncle's unseemly marriage, that makes me anxious on his nephew's behalf. But, like most happy unmarried people, I have a profound belief in marriage, and a desire to thrust that natural solution of life on every one excepting myself. The married, thank goodness, have not the monopoly of Illogic—which I always maintain is a science much more necessary to study than Logic; everybody is illogical, and life would be quite insane if they weren't. It is only the mad who demand absolute logic, and the place at which people, great or little, begin to do this, is the place where their reason is in danger. (Look at Tolstoï

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or Ruskin, if you doubt this!) However, this is one of my feeble digressions, and I come back to matrimony. It is the right thing for all men, but most particularly for you. You don't like solitude, and you need (may I say so?) the kind of sympathy that only women can give. Of course, you can get this, in a dislocated fashion, outside marriage; but then it is not the all-surrounding atmosphere which is what men need and only a wife can give. And if men forego this, it always seems to me that the unfortunate creatures pay a penalty and narrow their own sympathies. They rust and crust and get encased in set habits; and, nice though you are, if you remain single, this fate is almost sure to befall you. The world at this moment seems full of intelligent, warm-hearted girls, much more equipped for companionship than the young women of my generation. I don't mean one of your hygienic, gymnastic Egerias, the kind of golf pedant who makes the trapese into an article of religion, or the intellectual pedant, or the frivolous pedant who splits hairs about *chic*, or, indeed,

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any pedant at all. Don't, an' you respect me, choose anything solemn, and do choose someone who enjoys. Isn't that the one thing needful? And isn't that the quality which seems to exist much more sincerely for the women of to-day than for their grandmothers? We are allowed free play for all our faculties, while they were often forced into false sentiment by their narrow possibilities; sentiment, indeed, seems to have been the only accessible distraction of such women as were not rich. But I don't know why I am preaching this sermon to you, who have to choose for yourself and are a much wiser person for yourself than I am! Anyhow, don't let the grass grow too long under your feet, or the delicious little daisies of domestic happiness will be smothered. And forgive my indelicacy, and forgive my prosiness, and tell me anything you can of your uncle and his Fatima—only, as she is an elderly Fatima, I hope she will be wise and ask for no keys.—Your affectionate friend,

BARBARA MOORE.

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BACHELORS' CLUB,
March 28th.

DEAR MISS MOORE,—It is awfully kind of you to write about the book. Of course, it would be humbug if I pretended that I was not pleased by the notice in the *Times;* but I don't feel at all sure about the future. I feel as if I had used up all my ideas (such as they are) in this one book, and I don't fancy old Smudge will be able to get much more flesh off my bones. (By the way, Smudge is not at all a bad chap. It is "Sandy" Scrimgeour who is such a terror—a "dour Scot" all over.)

Poor old Mrs. Stone! She was a good old soul, and awfully kind to me when I was a boy. And she was mixed up with all sorts of "Auld Lang Syne" associations. But you know my home-story, so I need not go into all that now. Of course, it is a relief not to have to squeeze out that little sum which I used to send the poor old lady periodically. I should have been a brute if I hadn't done it; but at the same time,

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when one has only a very small income, it is more convenient to have no extra calls on it.

About marriage, I hardly know what to say. Apart from anything else, I don't think I could "run to it" for a good many years yet. You know I rather bar George Eliot, but there is one saying of hers—a kind of proverb—I forget which book it comes in—which I have always thought rather good: "He had catched a great cold, who had no other covering than the skin of a bear not yet killed." And that would be about my case if I began to frame matrimonial plans on the strength of those books which, according to your kind prophecy, I am to write some day.

But, whatever happens, you may rest assured that I shall never marry a girl-athlete, nor an æsthete, nor a blue-stocking. As you say, a girl ought to be able to "enjoy." But *what* is she to enjoy? I shouldn't much care for a girl who enjoyed cutting up live animals, or smoking cigars, or writing papers on Browning.—Ever yours, FRANK.

P.S.—As to the Happy Couple: of course you

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know that they were married at the Registrar's, much to the disgust of the Skettles family, who had hoped for a smart wedding; and they went to Biarritz for the honeymoon, as the doctors told Uncle Algy he wanted Sun. I hear that he bought the *Times* at Victoria, and gave Mrs. Woodhouse the outside sheet.

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CHAPTER XXI

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CHAPTER XXI

CHEYNE ROW,
Easter Monday.

MY DEAR FRANK,—I am writing to give you a piece of unimportant news; only, as it affects me, I know you will like to hear it. I am taking unto myself a house-mate—for a time, at all events. You will, I think, recall Celia Dunthorne, whom you met when you stayed with the Roders? I remember your describing her to me as the girl who was equally good at riding and painting, and your being surprised at discovering she was my cousin, several times removed. Her father, always regarded as a rich country gentleman, died suddenly three weeks ago, and has actually left her penniless. It turns out that for the last five years he has speculated recklessly. Celia was his only

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child, and instead of being the heiress we have all imagined, she will now, poor girl, have to do something for her living. "Penniless" is generally a comparative word, and she has about a hundred of her own; but she is coming to live with me and be my companion, and will try to do something with her painting. I have always had an especial affection for her, and a liking for her quiet wit and her way of looking at life. Happy as I already am, I am surprised at the pleasure with which I look forward to seeing someone adequate in the other arm-chair on the opposite side of the fireplace. Even one's book has a second life if one can now and then look up and comment on it, or read aloud a passage to a sympathetic listener—who will do the same by you. Not that a book's first life is not good enough, but there is something intensifying in the lens of a good comrade's mind; refracted light is by far the most exhilarating. Besides, I hate to feel that I am growing set in my habits, and I believe that living alone makes rather a Nero of one. Have you ever noticed that people who

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live alone speak in louder voices than those who do not? And I think too, that I can make Celia Dunthorne happy, which is by far the most important consideration in the matter. When will you come and renew acquaintance with her? You would find us both at eight o'clock supper on Sunday; no one else will be here, excepting, possibly, my brother.

I should have answered your last letter long before this, but all these new arrangements have taken up my time and attention. Your account of Mr. Woodhouse's Honey, or, rather, Bitter-Aloes-Moon, amused me immensely. What will become of his poor demented Fatima, who has no Sister Anne to console and no Conrad to rescue her? And an *Invalid* Bluebeard into the bargain! What a fate! The original Bluebeard was, at least, well—almost too well—and was in the habit of going out, but your uncle will always be there.

As to the rest of your letter, of course you are right. All that I meant was, don't wait too long for the impossible; the possible so often produces, nay,

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contains it, and we constantly miss happiness because it is so near us and we are looking fixedly ahead.

Don't forget to bring me back my books, if you come on Sunday. We will discuss them, and as many other things as you please, when we meet. Meanwhile I am, as ever, your affectionate friend,

BARBARA MOORE.

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BACHELORS' CLUB,
April 15th.

DEAR MISS MOORE,—Many thanks. I will come to supper next Sunday with great pleasure, and will bring the books. I shall enjoy meeting Miss Dunthorne again. We had some splendid rides together in the New Forest, and she gave me two capital sketches which she had made—one at Beaulieu, with a view of the sea, and the other near Malwood, with Sir William Harcourt walking in his garden in the cool of the evening, like our First Parents.

I am awfully sorry she has been left so badly off. What business had her old idiot of a father to go speculating? What beasts one's relations are!—*often* are, I mean. By the way, have you heard Uncle Algy's latest? When he and the bride get back from "the amorous moon of honeycomb," as Q. calls it, he is going to have a great gathering of cousins to stay at Feversham. What is so very characteristic of him

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is the way he is sending out his invitations. He has instructed his solicitor—old Perkins, of Gray's Inn—to make a list of all his nephews and nieces, first and second cousins, and first cousins once removed on both sides.

Then he is going to strike out those who have offended him, and invite the remainder. This will both make the offenders feel uncomfortable, and will also reduce the expenses of the party—which will not be a large one, after the striking-out is finished. Do you think I shall get an invitation? Honestly, I think I ought, as a reward for my exertions in getting Lady Louisa home, after that awful scene in Portland Place. I thought she would have expired in the four-wheeler; and when she got back to Bute Street she drank brown sherry till she was in "a state of doubtful ebriety," as the lady novelist said.

But the best thing of all was what Uncle Algy said in his letter to old Perkins, when he instructed him to make this list. I heard it from young Harry Perkins, who is in his uncle's office, and who was my fag at

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Harrow. Uncle A. began his letter—"I recognise no obligation to love one's relations; but it is more convenient not to hate them." *More convenient!* Isn't that Uncle A. all over?

Au revoir Sunday. Affectionately yours,

FRANK.

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CHAPTER XXII

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CHAPTER XXII

THE HALL, FEVERSHAM-SUR-STRAND,
April 25th, 1903.

DEAR MR. PERKINS,—I address you with a familiarity unusual in one's dealings with professional advisers, on account of the long-standing connexion —I had almost said friendship—which has subsisted between my family and yours. My father frequently stated his belief that his affairs were by far the most considerable which were ever entrusted to the care of your firm; and I distinctly remember him saying that he had been shocked, and even pained, by the untimely decease of his solicitor—your father—who, if I recollect aright, died here from sleeping in a damp bed, when he came down for the winter audit, after the

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house had been shut up for several months. This incident seems, in a sense, to link our families together, and makes it less difficult for me to approach the exceedingly delicate subject with which this letter is concerned.

You are, of course, aware that I lately contracted a second marriage. The propriety of that step I did not, and do not, consent to discuss with any advisers, professional or other. But you, who are conversant with the fact, are also aware that I carefully avoided making any settlements upon the second Mrs. Woodhouse. It seemed to me preposterous that a young woman raised, if I may so express myself, from the ranks of manual labour (however well connected), should expect an independent income in the event of certain contingencies which may perhaps be long delayed. Indeed, I may go further, and say I hoped that the consciousness that she was dependent upon me for the very unaccustomed luxuries and advantages which she now enjoyed, would secure, not only that careful attention to my health which is of course the

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paramount consideration, but also a scrupulous regard for my wishes and tastes even in matters apparently insignificant.

This being the case, you will judge of my astonishment, and I may add my just indignation, when during our sojourn at Biarritz I found Mrs. Woodhouse considerably more intent on pleasure than on her domestic duties. The first unfavourable sign which I noticed was an unwillingness to read aloud articles from the *Economist* when I was troubled with sleeplessness at nights. This, I may observe, was a task which my dear first wife (though herself a sufferer from bronchial asthma) discharged, if not cheerfully, at least willingly. Since her death, it had devolved on my servant Barnes, whose failure to read intelligibly, especially when aroused from sleep, often irritated my nerves, and did me distinct harm, instead of good. In marrying a second time, I naturally looked forward to intelligent reading, animated yet soothing, and had hopes that it might take the place of bromide, and even enable me to dispense with my hop-pillow. To my

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great surprise, Mrs. Woodhouse so far forgot what was due to me, and even to herself, as to denounce the *Economist* as "gibberish," and to declare that she had "no notion of being kept awake all night after working like a slave all day." In what, you will naturally ask, did that work consist? At the most, it never amounted to more than carrying my camp-stool (for I am easily fatigued) and my green umbrella (for I dread strong sun). Even these light tasks, which surely should have been labours of love, Mrs. Woodhouse forsook in favour of donkey-rides on the shore and expeditions to the neighbouring mountains. She even went so far as to buy a handbook of the Basque language, and to say, with deliberate heartlessness, that if I wanted reading to at night she would read *that;* and, if Basque didn't send me to sleep, nothing would.

You will readily understand that, under these circumstances, my sojourn at Biarritz was not an agreeable experience. I am the last man in the world to make unreasonable demands, or to expect wisdom from a

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young woman at a period of life too often given over to amusement. Endeavouring to regard the whole case in the calm light of reason, and laying aside all purely personal considerations, I tried to persuade myself that Mrs. Woodhouse's demeanour (so unlike what I had a right to expect) arose from a not unnatural elation at the great and sudden change in her circumstances. The luxuries of a first-rate hotel, constant carriage exercise, and new clothes of the latest (and, I may add, the most preposterous) fashions, constituted such an entirely novel *entourage* that a weak and frivolous nature might easily be thrown off its balance. I comforted myself with the reflection that, when we returned to England, the dignity and order of our daily life at Feversham, coupled with the consciousness that I filled, however unworthily, a position of considerable importance in the County, and represented a long-descended tradition both of wealth and of breeding, would recall Mrs. Woodhouse to a sense of her duty. In this hope—not, I must confess, very confidently entertained—I returned to England imme-

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diately after Easter. You will recollect that I gave you instructions to prepare, from the "Peerage" and the "Landed Gentry," a list of my near relations on both sides. From that list I eliminated all those who, at different times and in different ways, had shown themselves unworthy of my countenance. The remainder I invited to a family party here, and I looked forward with some curiosity to seeing how Mrs. Woodhouse would comport herself in the capacity of hostess. The results proved grievous even beyond my worst expectations. She denounced my sisters (who, though not young, are well-bred and conversable women) as "frumps." When she ought to have been doing the honours of the house to my married cousins and their daughters, she persisted in playing billiards with the curate—a most objectionable youth, fresh from Oxford. In the evenings, when I suggested music (for my eldest sister was no inconsiderable pianist in her day), Mrs. Woodhouse proposed Bridge; and, when I offered to read aloud some remarks on the Incidence of Taxation which I thought

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of sending to the *Economist,* she expressed her preference for a comic song.

But, distressing as all this was, it amounted, after all, only to social delinquency. It stopped short of (though it may have approached) personal disrespect to myself or indifference to my health. But the crowning outrage was not long withheld. The prevalence of northeast winds made me more than usually conscious of rheumatic pains flying about my system. For such pains, as of course you are aware, massage is *the* remedy. One evening, therefore, when the discomfort had been unusually trying, I rang the bell for hand-candlesticks at 10 p.m., saying to my guests, by way of apology for leaving them, "Now it is time for Mrs. Woodhouse to give me my massage."

You will scarcely believe me when I tell you that, before the words were well out of my mouth, Mrs. Woodhouse, who was teaching the curate a game of cards called Casino, exclaimed, in a voice audible to the whole room, "How selfish you are! Can't you see I am busy? Go along to bed and massage yourself.

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And, if you want any manicure, get Barnes to do it. I really haven't common patience with you."

I have now laid before you the whole of this sad tale of ingratitude and indelicacy. Mrs. Woodhouse is still my wife, and that circumstance forbids me to employ the stronger language which your own sense of what is due to me will naturally supply. In the meanwhile, I must ask you, as my legal adviser, and also as a husband and a man of the world, to advise generally on this most painful case.—Yours faithfully,

ALGERNON WENTWORTH-WOODHOUSE.

T. PERKINS, Esq.,
Gray's Inn Square.

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CHAPTER XXIII

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CHAPTER XXIII

THESE pages from a Woman's Diary are to be kept with my Will and with the small MS. volume in my desk,—to wit, "The Versicles of a Lonely Spirit,"—and, at my death, I desire that they shall be given to Algernon Woodhouse, of Feversham-sur-Strand, inscribed with these simple words: "In remembrance of Elaine."

If he be no longer there, I desire my executor to commit the said Diary, unread, to the flames, unless he should deem it to be of any service to the Community, in which case he may use it for the public good.

ELAINE THOMPSON.

MAY DAY, 1903.

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Saturday morning.—Despatched "The Woof-Warp" by parcels post (1s. 9½d.) to Messrs. Brandnue & Co. Have decided, for my Soul's sake, not to share the family breakfast; it is a mere frittering of my intellect, and I can do no good so early by my presence. For it is impossible to prevent trivial comments on the post, or my father's reading out of the *Times*, which takes up the whole meal. I ate my grape-nuts in solitude, and felt that I possessed my soul. I came down at ten o'clock, and was urged to an outburst of just anger, *on principle*, when I found my sister doing household accounts at the only writing-table in the drawing-room. There is all the difference between this anger and personal irritation. . . . She actually called me selfish, but my Will-power prevailed, and she found she could quite well do the accounts on her knee. Thus I taught her Resource as well as a due Altruism and a sense of proportion. But it was at the expense of my Muse. Only wrote one line.

At eventide.—Felt very, very lonely. There seemed none left to whom to write a Sonnet—none, I

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mean, who would care and understand—none great and pure and passionate. Wrote a Sonnet to Myself. Out of solitude the spirit speaks, and much is born in silence.

TO MYSELF.

O Thou Who, though men flee, art always there,
Thou Who canst never leave me till I die:
Where wert Thou born, Bud of Eternity?
Who taught Thee thus to love and do and dare?
Is it a law that Titan souls must bear
The dreary denseness of the smaller fry?
That Thou, Who feedest on the higher air,
Canst never, never know the reason why?
Stride on, Myself! Stride onward, anywhere,
So long as Thou art moving. Far and nigh
Foes strike: some of Thy blood—some even share
Thy roof-tree. Still stride on, with nostrils high,
Human, yet godlike; dusk, yet passing fair;
Mine own, yet not mine own—my Cosmic I!

Is it not true that we never know when we put forth our Best?

Thursday.—"The Woof-Warp" back again. This is the eighth time. I feel very, very weary, but I must remember that I am the servant of Art. I will send

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it on again to Messrs. Dole & Dourson. . . . As I wrote these words there came a letter from Mrs. George Woodhouse asking me if I still sought employment. A friend of hers at Surbiton is connected with the Spasmon Food Depôt, and the Company is looking out for a feminine assistant. "She must be a perfect lady and an Enthusiast; above all, she must be an Expert in writing prose and verse, as they are in need of attractive advertisements." So says my friend.

My first impulse is to shrink—and yet—and yet—is anything unclean? Is not the term "attractive advertisements" a mere paraphrase for something higher—for an Art ennobled and purified, free of self, subservient to the good of man? To the pure all things are pure—even food of every description. And does not Spasmon Food especially strengthen Man—and help him the gladlier on his way? Should we not hold it sacred? The Body is the Temple of the Soul, and it is a privilege to serve it. When one comes to think, this is purer service than the creation of an art

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that gratifies oneself. Then, the more I ponder, the clearlier it is borne in upon me that Art is a jealous mistress and wishes me to toil for Her alone, without any thought of a public. So will I do. I will write for Art and Myself only, except as regards my Song: that shall be for the Strength of the World. For I will sing of Spasmon and all that it will do towards making a newer and a better generation. The salary is £120 a year—and travelling abroad would largely develop my Ego. But money is only a symbol.

Friday morning.—This came to me last night, in the silent watches:—

TO THE CHANGE IN MYSELF.

(*At the Parting of the Ways.*)

I, who now and ever, lived for Art's sake,
  Shall I hold this changeless as the Best?
Nay, but I will rather live for Heart's sake;
  Strive afresh, nor stop to take my rest.

Even Food is holy when preparèd
  Through long vigils for the Love of Men.
Nought there is that's coarse and nought that's arid—
  Body's Soul, Soul's Body, now as then.

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I have applied for the post in the Spasmon Depôt and have just been accepted by telegram. I enter on my New Path next Thursday.

April 30th.—This is an inward and not an outward Journal, and so I will not here note any of the sordid details that are bound to occur in a Professional Woman's day. Actions are only symbols, and it suffices to say that the first day of my new career was in every way successful and beneficent. I am now going to create my "Hymn of Spasmon." What matters it that it will be posted on street walls in blue letters? Is it not rather good that true Verse and true Nourishment should go hand in hand and be sown broadcast through the land? For advertisements are also only symbols.

Friday, May 1st.—The strangest, sweetest thing has happened. To-day, at the Superintendent's request, I was going through the letters that had come by the morning's post, when I happed upon the following note:—

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April 30th, 1903.

To the SPASMON DEPÔT, Regent Street.

I am informed by Lady Louisa Fitzwigan that she has been for some years a customer of yours, and that your Spasmon Powder (though by no means so good as that sold in Berlin) is less adulterated than any other which she can obtain in London. On the strength of this recommendation, I am inclined to give you a trial. My case is a very peculiar one, and the powder, if it is to be of any use to me, must be delivered at 4 a.m. every morning, and there are several other details which will need attention. Before giving you an order, I should wish to satisfy myself, by personal inspection, that your shop is in good sanitary condition, as I am told that Spasmon Powder is an idoneous vehicle of noxious germs. I shall therefore call at noon to-morrow, when I beg that your Manager, or some other responsible agent, may be in readiness to receive me. —Yours, etc.,

ALGERNON WENTWORTH-WOODHOUSE.

I had hardly finished it when the door turned on its

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hinges; I lifted my eyes, and before me was—Algernon Woodhouse! paler, older, sadder, and yet more spiritual than of old. When he caught sight of me, he stood as one transfixed. I could see the struggle that went on within him. He gave me one swift, passion-swept glance—a glance in which Love and Renunciation wrestled together—and then he *fled*. I can use no other word. It seemed as if he knew that his only course was flight—that, given a moment more, he would have succumbed. Strong and noble to the uttermost verge, would I have him different? Far from it. I have had my supreme moment. That instant's glance was charged with revelation; it said more than ten years of intercourse. For if it was passionate, it was also sad. He *looks shackled*—irrevocably shackled. As I gazed at him, I could not help remembering Wagner's Wotan between Fricka and Freia. He has chosen Fricka. He has renounced Freia. . . . And yet he has left me a perfect memory, and my last thought of him shall be Song. It shall stand here as my record of an Ideal, and I will call it my "Song of Pursuit."

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TO ONE WHO FLEES FROM ME.

Dost thou flee, my Dearest—
  Run from Me?
Yet this Love thou fearest
(Wheresoe'er thou steerest),
  Is to be.

Vain the Space thou clearest:
  Soul is free.
Farthest, I am nearest;
When thou disappearest—
  After thee!

Though the world eschew thee,
  —Thee, my Friend—
I shall still pursue thee,
Chase thee, and imbue thee
  Till the End.

O'er Life's hill and hollow,
  By Life's shore,
Fleeter than Apollo,
I will follow, follow
  Evermore.

Dauntless (I foretold thee)
  Beats my heart,
Till at last I hold thee,
Catch thee and enfold thee
  Ne'er to part.

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CHAPTER XXIV

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CHAPTER XXIV

THE HALL, FEVERSHAM-SUR-STRAND,
May 14th, 1903.

DEAR MR. PERKINS,—The last time I wrote to you it was to ask your advice on a delicate matter affecting my personal happiness. You will pardon me if I say that the advice which I received from you, besides showing little acquaintance with the usages of good society, was even ludicrously inadequate.

Now, therefore, I do not ask advice. This letter is intended to inform you of certain facts, and to give you certain instructions arising out of those facts. The facts themselves are sufficiently startling. Briefly stated, they amount to this. *I have narrowly escaped the most terrible fate imaginable.* Mrs. Woodhouse has gone very near to poisoning me. Whether the

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calamitous act was due to any sinister motive, is a question which I must leave to Mrs. Woodhouse and an All-seeing Power. I cannot discuss it with a Solicitor. If not prearranged, the act argues a carelessness on Mrs. Woodhouse's part, not culpable only, but actually criminal.

The circumstances must be briefly narrated.

You will recall that in my last letter I told you that the discomfort (partly rheumatic and partly gouty in its origin) which I habitually suffer had been greatly aggravated by the cold weather of April. As the spring advanced it did not diminish, but rather increased. Holding strongly that to obtain the *very best* medical aid is a duty the neglect of which is tantamount to suicide, I did not hesitate to tell the Local Practitioner that I was dissatisfied with his treatment, and desired him to arrange for a consultation with Sir William Broadbent. The consultation took place yesterday. I need not trouble you with the details of Sir William's diagnosis and prognosis. It is enough to say that they were more satisfactory than I had

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ventured to hope. He returned to London after luncheon, leaving two prescriptions—the one for an effervescing mixture, the other for a liniment. These were made up by the best chemist in the neighbouring town, and brought to my room at bedtime. I retired to rest at my usual hour, and soon summoned Mrs. Woodhouse from the adjacent dressing-room to arrange my hot-water bottles, air-cushion, and hop-pillow. These preliminaries discharged, Mrs. Woodhouse brought a tumbler containing an eighth part of the mixture in a wineglassful of water. I drank it, and returned the glass to Mrs. Woodhouse, remarking on the inefficiency of country chemists, for the mixture did *not* effervesce, and I could not detect the taste of salicine, which figured largely in the prescription. Stepping back from the bedside, Mrs. Woodhouse held the bottle to the light, and then exclaimed, in a tone which froze my blood, "*My love, I've given you the liniment!*"

Should my life be protracted to my hundredth year, I shall never forget the agony of that moment. My

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cries brought Barnes, who, with commendable promptitude, sent off one of the footmen on a bicycle to fetch the doctor and the stomach-pump. Meanwhile Barnes himself vigorously plied me with salad-oil, salt, mustard, and warm water, while my housekeeper tickled the back of my throat with a feather. During this frightful crisis Mrs. Woodhouse, instead of attempting to render assistance, stood wringing her hands and exclaiming, with what I will hope was not simulated distress, "I have killed my husband!"

Meanwhile the doctor arrived, and you may conjecture my relief when he informed me that the principal ingredient in the liniment was not, as I had feared, laudanum, but soap; and that an extraordinary eruption of coloured bubbles, which had caused me great alarm, was due to this comparatively innocuous cause. Having now rallied from the shock, I collected all my moral force (which I believe is not inconsiderable), and ordered Mrs. Woodhouse to leave the house which she had so nearly rendered desolate. She recognised *that* in my voice and eye which could not be trifled

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with, and quitted my roof without another word. She is now staying at the Rectory, pending those legal arrangements which it will be your business to make. I can hardly suppose that the law will require an injured husband to make any considerable allowance to a wife whose misconduct has so nearly cost him his life; but that is a matter which I must leave to you, only begging you to do all in your power to reduce that tax on my resources to a minimum.

This essential point secured, you will kindly notify to the public that this place is to let on a long lease; for the associations connected with it are too painful to permit of my living here again. Henceforward I intend to reside mainly in Portland Place, removing to Bournemouth during the prevalence of fogs; and to set myself entirely free from the entanglements of domestic and family life. Those entanglements, as I have found by much experience, are utterly incompatible with that care for my health which I increasingly feel to be my primary duty. After all, I have reason to believe that, in spite of many functional

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troubles, my constitution is sound. When I reflect that my father, though gouty and dyspeptic, lived to be eighty-seven, and that my grandfather, notoriously addicted to the pleasures of the table, was choked by a fish-bone in his ninety-third year, I feel that, after a stormy day, a bright, and even a prolonged, evening may yet (with due care) be in store for me.—Yours faithfully,

ALGERNON WENTWORTH-WOODHOUSE.

T. PERKINS, Esq.,
Gray's Inn Square.

THE END

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